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WOMEN'S WAGES

A Study of the Wages of Industrial Women and Measures Suggested to Increase Them

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INTRODUCTION

THE increased employment of women in industrial occupations was one of the most striking economic effects of the war. The drawing-off of thousands of men to military life required the labor of a force at least three or four times as large to maintain them with the necessary equipment. In England, this resulted in an increase of about five hundred thousand women in manufacturing establishments in 1917 over 1914. In the United States, we do not know at the present time the exact extent of the industrial change, but there was abundant evidence of an occupational readjustment similar to that which England experienced, and if the war had continued for another year we would undoubtedly have seen a larger increase in the number of industrial women and wage-earners.

The war, however, has merely thrown into sharp relief one of the changes that has been going on in the employment of women in the last three decades. This may be indicated from a comparison, by decades since 1880, of the increase of the female population ten years of age and over, with the increase in the number gainfully employed. Such a comparison gives the following results: [1]

[1] The numbers from which these percentages are derived are found in 13th Census, vol. iv, p. 37.

	Increase of female population 10 years of age and over	*Increase of female population 10 years of age and over, gainfully employed*
1890-1880	27.9	50.9
1900-1890	22.5	32.8
1910-1900	22.3	51.8

These figures show that there has been not only an enormous absolute addition to the number of wage-earners, but that it has been an increase out of all proportion to the growth of the female population.

Even more striking than the increase in the actual numbers of industrial women workers during the war period has been the entrance of women into occupations hitherto carried on by men. Before the war, men and women seldom came into competition in the same occupation. The division and subdivision of processes and occupations resolved themselves into men's work and women's work, and although the separation was not always perfectly consistent, it was generally true that men predominated in the skilled, and women in the unskilled work. But the war forced the penetration of women into hitherto skilled work, or into occupations traditionally carried on by men. Under the pressure of military needs, restrictive trade-union measures were suspended. Skilled work — by the introduction of machinery and the process of breaking up a complex operation into a number of simple ones—was largely eliminated, or brought within the capacity of the untrained woman. Once women were given a chance to try them, certain kinds of work which had been considered above the line of their strength or skill were carried on successfully. For other semi-skilled occupations, short preliminary training courses were arranged. Their aim was to give the learner "machine sense," and to teach the use of one or two machine tools. The pressure of war forced productive efficiency to the utmost, and it moved along those lines which have been

made familiar in the division and subdivision of occupations, the extension of unskilled types of work and an increase in the already large proportion of unskilled workers.

That the effects of the war would continue far beyond its duration was, as the struggle was prolonged from year to year, sufficiently obvious. The loss of man power easily may compel the employment of women in large numbers for an almost indefinite period. Nor is it at all likely that when manufacturers resume their peace-time activity the effort to obtain efficient production will abate. We must look forward, then, to the continued importance of the unskilled woman worker and her labor problem. Wages are a vital part of that problem. For nearly a century the lowness of women's wages has been a theme of constant complaint. Women's wages are a synonym for low wages, and hence the employment of women has come to be regarded as a menace to the wage standards men have struggled to establish and to maintain. Men have accepted the fact of these low wages as inevitable, bound up with conditions peculiar to women workers. Women themselves have accepted it, and only a small minority of them may be said to have developed any wage-earner's consciousness and conception of the role they play or should play in the labor world.

Even before the war, however, there were signs of change. Among the most conspicuous were the growth of trade-unionism among women, the beginnings of a demand for vocational education for girls, and, above all, the rapid spread of minimum-wage legislation for women and minors. Along these lines, it is the writer's belief, improvement will be made in the economic position of women in the years immediately ahead.

As a starting-point for the present discussion of these measures, a statement has been made of the pre-war level of women's wages in the United States and of its signifi-

cance in the labor world. This statement sets forth, on a basis of earnings, the status of women as a class of wage-earners and leads to a summary of those features that distinguish their wage scale from that of men. To give more definite meaning to the figures by including real as well as money income, the relation of wages to the cost of living is analyzed. Since the main discussion is concerned with the wages of women as a special class of laborers, rather than with the more general subject of labor's share in distribution, the analysis of the wage data is followed by a consideration of the factors that have their peculiar influence upon the earnings of women. By these means, the writer hopes, the way has been prepared for a helpful evaluation of the proposed remedial measures — minimum-wage legislation, trade-unionism, and vocational education. The attention that has been given to the first of these measures reflects the importance that is commonly attached to it. This importance made it seem advisable to go into it in more detail than in the case of the others. The chapters as a whole, however, should make clear that there is no panacea which can combat the influences that hold the wage scale of women to a level far below that of men and far below the cost of a normal standard of living.

CHAPTER I

The Wages of Industrial Women

The most detailed and comprehensive data on women's wages in industrial occupations appeared in the Federal Census of Manufactures of 1905. According to that report, of the one million factory women sixteen years of age and over, about one-fifth (18.2) received under four dollars a week; one-half (49.4), under six; and over three-fourths (77.6), under eight. Less than one-tenth (8.3) earned over ten dollars. These figures represent the weekly income for the busiest week of the year and are taken directly from the employer's payroll.

Different sections of the country show variations from this general level. In Southern factories women were paid appreciably less. About three-fourths received less than six dollars a week and over nine-tenths received under eight. On the other hand, in the far West a relatively large proportion are in the higher wage classes. Scarcely two-thirds earned under eight dollars a week and nearly one-fifth earned over ten. The North Atlantic States, which included two-thirds of the total number at work, showed about the same level of wages as the country at large, while the North Central States had a lower level, but not so low as in the South.

The Census of 1905 also reported earnings by states and industries. In only five of the fourteen states that led in the number of women employed in factories did less than three-fourths earn under eight dollars a week. In only a

single instance, California, did less than two-thirds earn under that amount. On the other hand, the proportion rose to over four-fifths in eight states and to over nine-tenths in three, Maryland, Indiana, North Carolina. Briefly speaking, from two-thirds to nine-tenths of the women in these leading industrial states received less than eight dollars a week.

Taking another point in the wage scale — six dollars a week—it appears that from one-third to over nine-tenths of the workers were reported as earning less than this amount. In Massachusetts, where 144,000 women were employed, one-third received less than six dollars, but in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and New Jersey, which ranked next in the number of women employed, nearly one-half in New York, and well over that proportion in the other states, earned less than six dollars.

Marked as the proportions are in the groups receiving under six and eight dollars, the massing in the numbers earning under four dollars is noteworthy also. About one-fifth of the women in New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, respectively, earned under that amount, and one-fourth in Ohio. Even in California, where a relatively large proportion is found in the higher-wage groups, nearly fifteen per cent received under four dollars a week. Massachusetts and Rhode Island make the best showing in this respect, eight per cent (8.3) earning under four dollars in the former state and seven per cent (6.8) in the latter.

The figures by industries show the same facts in different detail. Wages were reported for twenty-five different lines of manufacture. In twelve of them, over nine-tenths of the women were employed. With the exception of the boot and shoe industry, women's ready-made clothing, certain branches of the printing trade, and woolen and worsted manufactures, four-fifths of the women engaged in each of

these twenty-five industries received less than eight dollars a week. In the boot and shoe industry, which makes the most favorable showing, fifty-seven per cent received less than eight dollars. As a rule in these industries, over one-half the women receive less than six dollars. In only one instance—again the boot and shoe industry—do as few as one-third earn under this amount. This industry also shows an unusual proportion earning over ten dollars a week—twenty-three per cent. This is nearly ten per cent higher than the next highest industry in the group, *i. e.*, women's ready-made clothing, where fourteen per cent earned over ten dollars a week. With these exceptions, the numbers found in the high-wage group are negligible.

At the other end of the scale a large proportion in certain industries may be found. Of 34,000 tobacco workers, twenty-four per cent (23.7) received under four dollars a week; of 13,000 shirt-makers, twenty-six (26.1), and of 27,000 workers on men's ready-made clothing, nineteen per cent (18.6), were in this wage class. In the making of worsted goods which employed 20,000 women, as few as six per cent were in this wage group, and in the manufacture of woolen goods and in the boot and shoe industry the percentage is as low as ten. Even in the making of women's clothing, which is relatively a high-paid trade, between fourteen and fifteen per cent received under four dollars a week.

The general statement of wages given in the Census of Manufactures of 1905 is confirmed, as the following figures show, by the data collected in the Federal investigation into the condition of women and child wage-earners during the years 1907-1911.

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN 16 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER EARNING UNDER SPECIFIED AMOUNTS

	Under $4	*Under $6*	*Under $8*	*Over $10*
Census, 1905	18.2	49.4	77.6	8.3
Federal Report	18.5	49.1	76.8	9.6

In the course of the later investigation, pay-roll data were obtained for nearly one hundred thousand women 16 years of age and over, working in representative establishments of twenty-seven different industries. Four industries were selected for special study—cotton textiles, men's ready-made clothing, glass, and silk. The following figures show the proportion of workers 16 years of age and over earning under specified amounts in a representative week.

	Under $4	*Under $6*	*Under $8*	*$10 and over*
Cotton, New England mills	13.2	38.0	67.4	13.6
Southern mills	32.6	68.0	92.5	1.9
Men's ready-made clothing	20.1	49.0	73.1	12.0
Glass	8.2	64.0	91.3	2.5
Silk	22.0	45.3	71.1	17.2

Here there is the same concentration between four dollars on the one hand and eight dollars on the other that has been pointed out in the census report. Silk workers show an unusual proportion earning over ten dollars a week, while the percentage in this group is insignificant in the southern cotton mills and in the glass factories.

An examination of the twenty-three other industries less intensively studied in the Federal investigation shows, in general, the same situation. Exceptionally low wages are found in canning and preserving; unusually favorable ones in core-making. Rarely, however, does the proportion earning under eight dollars a week fall as low as two-thirds; rarely does the proportion earning under six dollars fall as low as one-third. In eleven of the twenty-seven industries, and including the cotton textile factories of New England,

ten per cent or over earned over ten dollars a week in the week reported. Nearly one-fifth of the silk workers were in this group. Usually, however, the proportion does not rise above ten per cent, and in fifteen industries where it is under ten per cent it is markedly so.

Among the later wage data of the pre-war period there are the reports of state labor bureaus and special commissions of inquiry into women's wages, together with the findings of minimum-wage boards. New Jersey, Kansas, Iowa and Massachusetts have excellent industrial statistics covering practically all wage-earning women. The reports of special investigations into wages which are the result of the minimum-wage movement are more one-sided in character. Limitations of time and money for investigation have forced in some instances a selection of industries typical of only the lowest paid lines of work. In others, however, although the data are meagre, they are believed to be representative.

Ninety-three thousand women were at work in the factories of New Jersey in the busiest week of 1913.[1] Of this number, twenty-five per cent earned under six dollars a week, sixty-one per cent under eight, and nearly eighteen per cent received over ten dollars. There were twenty-three industries each of which employed at least 1000 women. Two of them, the hat industry and the silk, make an exceptionally favorable showing. The proportion earning under eight dollars a week falls to nearly one-third, while in all the others it ranges from one-half to three-fourths. In the group earning under six dollars a week, the proportion is in general much lower than in the industries reported in the Federal study. In only one instance do as many as two-fifths receive less than this amount, more frequently it is

[1] *Bureau of Industrial Statistics of New Jersey. Thirty-seventh Annual Report,* 1914.

one-fifth or one-fourth, and sometimes falls as low as one-tenth. There is, however, a greater compression of workers within the group earning over six and under eight dollars. Into this group, as a rule, one-third or more of the women fall. In the making of scientific instruments, for example, the only industry where no women received under four dollars a week and where only ten per cent received less than six dollars, over one-half (53 per cent) earned more than six but under eight dollars. A small proportion earning under four dollars a week and a large proportion (relatively to other studies) earning over ten dollars are characteristic of the New Jersey data. Thus the state makes a good showing at the extremes of the wage scale. This is attended by a marked concentration in the six to eight-dollar group.

Two other states keep records similar to those of New Jersey—Iowa and Kansas. In Iowa, between nine and ten thousand women were employed in industrial establishments in 1913.[1] Of this number, twenty-seven per cent received under six dollars in the busiest week of the year; sixty-one per cent received under eight, and seventeen per cent earned over ten. This distribution, it may be noted, corresponds very closely to that of New Jersey. In different lines of work there is a similar variation. The proportion of women earning under six dollars a week ranges from six per cent in canning and preserving to forty-eight per cent in confectionery. From two-fifths to four-fifths earn under eight dollars a week. In the high-wage group—those earning over ten dollars a week—the proportion falls as low as six per cent in the candy trade and rises to nearly one-third in tobacco manufactures and in printing and publishing establishments. In Kansas in 1913, there were 3600 women and girls at work in fac-

[1] *Bureau of Labor Statistics for the State of Iowa. Sixteenth Biennial Report*, 1912-1913.

tories.[1] One-third of this number received under six dollars in the busiest week of the year; two-thirds (67.9) received under eight, and sixteen per cent (16.1) received over ten. In five industries that led from the standpoint of the number of women employed, from sixty per cent to nearly ninety per cent received under eight dollars a week.

According to the 28th Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Massachusetts (1913), ten per cent of the women employed in industrial establishments during the week of greatest employment received under six dollars, forty per cent received under eight, and thirty per cent received ten dollars or over. In the boot and shoe industry, which is one of the best paid for women, twenty per cent of the adult women employed during the busiest week of the year received less than eight dollars. In the cotton textile industry, which employs the largest number of women, approximately thirty-eight per cent fall in this wage group. In the manufacture of woolen and worsted goods—another large field for women's work—over forty per cent received under eight dollars. In the making of hosiery and knit goods, forty-six per cent of over 7000 adult women; in the making of women's clothing, thirty-five per cent of 5700; and in the making of confectionery, seventy-one per cent of 4800 women, received less than eight dollars. Thus, in the six leading industries for women in Massachusetts during a full working week, from twenty to over seventy per cent of the adult employed women earned less than eight dollars a week. These figures stand in a special class, since in Massachusetts the industrial statistics distinguish between workers over and under *eighteen* years of age instead of sixteen, as is customary in other wage statistics. The number of young persons in this two-year period modifies the

[1] *State of Kansas, Department of Labor and Industry. Twenty-ninth Annual Report*, 1913.

results, so they cannot be compared with those of other states. At the same time, the older age of the group gives increased significance to the general level of earnings, and they are for that reason included here.

The report on wages made by investigating commissions, though somewhat incomplete, as has been indicated, confirm the findings of official labor bureaus. In Connecticut, a commission appointed to inquire into women's wages in 1911 reported that of 4500 women in the leading industries for women (corsets, rubber and metal workers, cotton textiles) forty-one per cent (41.5) earned under six dollars and sixty-seven per cent (66.8) earned under eight.[1] In Michigan, the State Commission of Inquiry reported in 1915 that according to returns received from employers from all over the state, over one-half (52.8) of the women employed—and there were 34,000—received under eight dollars a week. Over one-fifth (22.1) received less than six.[2] In a study of some four hundred representative factory workers in Portland, Oregon, nearly one-half (48.1) received under eight dollars a week.[3] Again, in the first and second-class cities of Minnesota about one-half (53.8) of the factory women earned under eight dollars, and a little over one-fourth of them (25.2) earned less than six dollars a week. According to the wages prevailing between May and September, 1914, in Minneapolis, St. Paul and Duluth, over forty per cent of the women employed (8377) in manufactures received under eight dollars.[4]

[1] *State of Connecticut. Report of the Special Commission to Investigate the Conditions of Wage-earning Women and Minors in the State.*

[2] *Report of the State Commission of Inquiry*, Michigan, 1915.

[3] *Report of the Social Survey Committee of the Consumers' League of Oregon*, Portland, 1913.

[4] *Minnesota Welfare Commission. First Biennial Report 1913-1914*, p. 9, *et seq.*

In the state of Washington there is a better showing, with thirty-eight per cent (38.3) of 1700 representative factory workers receiving less than eight dollars and only ten per cent receiving less than six. In California, inquiries were made by the Industrial Welfare Commission into twelve different lines of manufacture in five principal industrial centers—San Francisco, Los Angeles, Oakland, Sacramento and San Diego. Of nearly 3000 adult women employed in the six most important lines of manufacture, forty per cent earned less than eight dollars. This is a slightly worse showing for the same period than is made in the Report of the State Bureau of Labor Statistics. According to the latter, of 7800 adult women employed in some 1500 manufacturing establishments, a little over thirty-six per cent received under eight dollars a week.

As a last source of wage data, let us turn to the reports of the New York State Factory Investigating Commission and the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission. In New York three typically low-paid industries were investigated—paper box manufacturing, candy manufacturing and shirt making. Actual weekly earnings of 6974 employees over 16 years of age in box factories in New York City and in up-state establishments were obtained for a week in the busy season. From these earnings it appears that nearly two-thirds of those employed in New York City earned less than eight dollars, and nearly seven-tenths (69.7) of those in the smaller cities earned less than eight dollars. Over a third in New York City and four-tenths in other cities earned less than six dollars. In the confectionery trade, of 4541 workers in New York City, eighty per cent earned less than eight dollars in an active business week and over one-half earned less than six dollars. In the other cities investigated, business was slack. Of some 600 workers, fifty-six per cent received under six, and eighty-one per

cent under eight dollars. In the men's shirt industry, seventy per cent of the women (4452) in New York City made less than eight dollars and forty per cent less than six. Outside the city, sixty per cent made less than eight and thirty-six per cent less than six dollars. In contrast to the other industries studied, the shirt industry was passing through an unusually dull season at the time the wage figures were taken.

The data given by the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission up to 1915 provide wage statistics for five different lines of manufacture. These figures refer to average annual wages and are much more representative of normal conditions than the New York data, which are based on the earnings of a single week.[1] They show that in the brush industry nearly nine-tenths (88.17) of the workers received less than eight dollars a week. In the corset factories, nearly seven-tenths (68.7), and in paper-box making, about three-fourths earned under that amount. In the candy trade, nearly ninety-two per cent, and in the making of women's ready-made clothing, seventy-eight per cent were in the same wage group.

The proportion earning under six dollars ranged from thirty-five per cent in the making of corsets to nearly seventy per cent in the candy trade. In the latter nearly one-fourth earned under four dollars a week. In brush, clothing, and in paper box factories, about fifteen per cent of the respective numbers employed earned less than four dollars. In the making of corsets, which is relatively a well-paid industry, ten per cent (9.6) failed to average four dollars a week during the period of employment.

Summarizing all these data gathered from various sources, it may be said that the wages of industrial women

[1] The earnings of each worker were taken for a 52-week period and divided by the number of weeks she was employed.

are compressed within a narrow range of from four to eight dollars a week. Occasionally a woman earns over ten dollars. More frequently she earns less than four. She who may be regarded as the typical worker receives five, six or seven dollars in a normal working week.

How sharply this wage scale marks women as the low-paid class of industrial workers is shown in a comparison with that of men. This comparison, it should be clear, is not made with any invidious intent. It is used merely as the most helpful way of orienting the wages of women as a class of workers. The figures following show the general distribution of men and women 16 years of age and over according to weekly earnings. (See table, page 26.) Two points stand out clearly, first, the marked concentration of women in the low-wage classes in contrast to the concentration of men in the upper-wage classes. Over three-fourths (77.9) of the women received less than eight dollars a week, while almost three-fourths of the men (74.5) received more than that amount. Eighteen per cent of the women received less than $4 a week and but four per cent of the men. Second, there is the noticeably wider range of earnings. Beginning at "less than $3," the range of men's earnings extends to "$25 and over"; the range of women's stops at the "$12 to $15" wage group. Only one per cent of the women are found in the higher wage groups.

UNITED STATES—SUMMARY OF MEN AND WOMEN BY CLASSIFLED WEEKLY EARNINGS WITH PERCENTAGE AT EACH AMOUNT: 1905 [1]

Weekly Earnings.	Men 10 years and over.			Women 16 years and over.		
	Number.	Percentage in the group.	Cumulative percentage.	Number.	Percentage in the group.	Cumulative percentage.
Total.....	2,619,053	100.0	....	588,599	100.0	....
Less than $3 ...	56,346	2.2	100.0	43,858	7.5	100.0
$3 to $4	57,597	2.2	97.8	64,170	10.9	92.5
$4 to $5	87,739	3.4	95.6	88,657	15.1	81.6
$5 to $6	103,429	4.0	92.2	95,674	16.3	66.5
$6 to $7	161,940	6.2	88.2	97,311	16.5	50.2
$7 to $8	196,981	7.5	82.0	68,192	11.6	33.7
$8 to $9	207,954	7.9	74.5	47,170	8.0	22.1
$9 to $10	343,812	13.1	66.6	34,050	5.8	14.1
$10 to $12	409,483	15.6	53.5	29,633	5.0	8.3
$12 to $15	450,568	17.2	37.9	14,294	2.4	3.3
$15 to $20	385,647	14.7	20.7	4,719	0.8	0.9
$20 to $25	106,046	4.0	6.0	654	0.1	0.1
$25 and over...	51,511	2.0	2.0	217	(2)	(2)
Earnings for the specified week; Total	$29,240,287			$3,633,481		
Average per wage-earner ...	$11.16			$6.17		

Yet another set of figures affords a comparison by means of median groups and average weekly earnings in twenty-five selected industries:

[1] *Census of Manufactures*, 1905: *Bulletin no. 93*, p. 11.

[2] Less than one-tenth of one per cent.

MEDIAN GROUPS AND AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS OF MEN AND WOMEN IN TWENTY-FIVE SELECTED INDUSTRIES: 1905 [1]

Industry.	Median groups and average weekly earnings.			
	Men 16 years and over.		Women 16 years and over.	
	Median group of earnings.	Average weekly earnings.	Median group of earnings.	Average weekly earnings.
All industries	$10 to $12	$11.16	$6 to $7	$6.17
Twenty-five selected industries	10 to 12	10.98	6 to 7	6.30
Agricultural implements	10 to 12	10.97	5 to 6	5.75
Boots and shoes	10 to 12	11.88	7 to 8	7.60
Carriages and wagons	10 to 12	10.83	5 to 6	5.85
Clothing, men's	10 to 12	12.23	6 to 7	6.07
Clothing, women's	12 to 15	13.52	6 to 7	6.85
Cotton goods	7 to 8	7.71	6 to 7	6.03
Electrical machinery, apparatus, and supplies	10 to 12	10.85	6 to 7	6.37
Foundry and machine-shop products	10 to 12	11.88	5 to 6	5.83
Furniture	9 to 10	10.16	5 to 6	5.53
Glass	10 to 12	14.10	4 to 5	5.08
Hosiery and knit goods	8 to 9	8.90	6 to 7	6.01
Iron and steel, blast furnaces	10 to 12	11.71	5 to 6	5.00
Iron and steel, steel works and rolling mills	10 to 12	12.56	5 to 6	5.95
Leather, tanned, curried, and finished	9 to 10	9.90	5 to 6	5.68
Lumber and timber products	9 to 10	9.25	5 to 6	5.22
Lumber, planing-mill products, including sash, doors, and blinds	10 to 12	11.15	5 to 6	5.18
Paper and wood pulp	9 to 10	10.64	6 to 7	5.85
Pottery, terra cotta, and fire clay products	9 to 10	10.87	5 to 6	5.69
Printing and publishing, book and job	12 to 15	12.94	6 to 7	6.54
Printing and publishing, newspapers and periodicals	12 to 15	13.13	5 to 6	5.95
Shirts	9 to 10	10.20	5 to 6	5.69
Silk and silk goods	10 to 12	10.57	5 to 6	6.11
Tobacco, cigars and cigarettes	10 to 12	11.14	5 to 6	5.97
Woolen goods	9 to 10	9.29	6 to 7	6.91
Worsted goods	9 to 10	9.83	6 to 7	6.78

[1] *Census of Manufactures*, 1905; *op. cit.*, p. 17.

The above figures show that in the industries as a whole, fifty per cent of the men earned ten dollars or more a week while fifty per cent of the women earned but six dollars or more. The average weekly earnings for men amounted to $11.16 a week, for women $6.17—a difference of fifty-five per cent in favor of the men. In the boot and shoe industry, where women's average earnings were the highest, they were $4.28 less than the average for men. In the cotton textiles, where the wages of men and women most closely approximate equality, the average weekly earnings of men, $7.71, exceeded those of women by $1.68.

Data furnished by the *Federal Report on the Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners* make possible a more refined comparison, in that male employes were included only when working in the same occupations as women and girls. It should be noted that the figures for men refer to a relatively small number. The general distribution of men and women in the New England cotton mills at selected points in the wage scale was as follows: [1]

Age Classes.	Males.					
	Employees.		Per cent of total in age group earning—			
	Number.	Per cent in age group.	Under $4.	Under $6.	Under $8.	Under $10.
Under 16 years.....	765	10.5	31.1	77.0	95.6	99.2
16 years and over...	6,492	89.5	13.4	32.0	54.3	71.8
Total	7,257	100.0	15.3	36.8	44.9	74.7

[1] *Report on the Condition of Woman and Child Wage Earners*, 61st Cong., 2d Ses., Senate Document, no. 645, vol. xviii, p. 20.

Age Classes.	Females.					
	Employees.		Per cent of total in age group earning—			
	Number.	Per cent in age group.	Under $4.	Under $6.	Under $8.	Under $10.
Under 16 years. ...	841	5.8	38.5	77.1	95.8	99.2
16 years and over...	13,744	94.2	13.2	38.0	67.4	86.4
Total	14,585	100.0	14.7	40.2	69.0	87.1

The figures show that starting with the same proportion of the sexes earning under four dollars a week, the men gradually gain on the women until in the group earning over ten dollars a week there are nearly fifteen per cent more men than women. The same fact is shown in a little more detail in the following table, shown on page 30. Here it is apparent that up to 21 years of age, although women earn less than men, the difference is not as marked as it is after that age.

Reduced to an hourly basis, the earnings of women in six selected occupations in the New England mills show a lower level in all but one, that of ringspinning. As ring-spinners, women 16 years of age and over, earn on the average one cent more an hour than men; and in Rhode Island mills, where a very fine grade of work is done, they earn over two and one-half cents more an hour than men. Since the rates offered are the same for men and women, the superiority of women for this kind of work is indicated by the difference in earnings. As a matter of fact, the greater nimbleness of their fingers makes them better adapted than men for this kind of work. It should be remembered,

PER CENT OF EMPLOYEES EARNING CLASSIFIED AMOUNTS IN A REPRESENTATIVE WEEK IN COTTON MILLS INVESTIGATED IN NEW ENGLAND, BY SEX AND AGE[1]

Classified weekly earnings.	16 and 17 years.		18 to 20 years.		21 years and over.	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
Under $2	4.9	4.8	4.4	2.8	3.2	2.4
$2 to $2.99	7.3	5.3	4.4	3.8	3.0	2.5
$3 to $3.99	11.0	13.5	10.4	9.0	4.2	5.7
$4 to $4.99	15.0	17.4	8.7	10.8	5.8	9.1
$5 to $5.99	21.8	20.6	17.2	16.1	7.7	12.7
$6 to $6.99	16.8	17.0	17.4	19.0	9.8	14.0
$7 to $7.99	12.8	9.4	11.9	15.1	9.5	14.4
$8 to $8.99	3.5	5.8	6.7	9.3	9.5	10.9
$9 to $9.99	4.4	3.1	6.8	7.1	10.7	10.7
$10 to $10.99	1.5	1.9	4.8	4.1	10.0	8.0
$11 to $11.99	.5	.7	3.5	1.5	9.4	4.6
$12 and over	.5	.4	3.8	1.4	17.2	5.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

however, that comparatively few men are found in this occupation. In so far as they engage at all in the spinning process, they concentrate in mule-spinning—a different type of work, one which they completely monopolize (chiefly because the mule is a very complicated machine and requires considerable mechanical skill to keep it rightly adjusted), and one in which the earnings are higher than in ring-spinning.

A further comparison of hourly earnings of men and women in cotton mills in Massachusetts shows the proportion that women's wages form of men's at different ages and at different points in the wage scale:

[1] *Report on the Condition, etc.*, vol. i, p. 307.

EARNINGS OF FEMALES AS PERCENTAGE OF EARNINGS OF MALES[1].

Age.	All occupations.					Weavers.				
	Number.		Earnings per hour.		Per cent of earnings of females of earnings of males.	Number.		Earnings per hour.		Per cent of earnings of females of earnings of males.
	Male.	Female.	Male.	Female.		Male.	Female.	Male.	Female.	
16 years	212	333	.112	.108	96.4	30	37	.141	.131	92.9
17 years	209	436	.114	.115	100.9	39	65	.135	.129	95.6
18 years	258	553	.126	.122	96.8	67	115	.150	.129	86.0
19 years	222	496	.129	.129	100.0	76	127	.155	.140	90.3
20 years	158	501	.136	.129	94.9	75	145	.150	.135	90.0
21 years	206	572	.140	.134	95.7	113	194	.154	.138	89.6
22 years	168	470	.152	.141	92.8	97	182	.171	.148	86.3
23 years	134	338	.161	.138	85.7	84	114	.171	.153	89.5
24 years	121	292	.168	.141	83.9	88	100	.178	.153	86.0
25 to 29 years	473	986	.173	.148	85.5	372	367	.180	.166	92.2
30 to 34 years	338	616	.175	.148	84.6	287	235	.179	.160	89.4
35 to 39 years	297	550	.176	.154	87.5	253	240	.180	.172	95.6
40 to 44 years	209	415	.176	.154	87.5	181	207	.183	.166	90.7
45 to 49 years	134	239	.180	.151	83.9	116	123	.181	.163	90.1
50 to 54 years	78	137	.152	.147	90.7	67	64	.170	.162	95.3
55 to 59 years	39	52	.162	.144	88.9	31	28	.174	.152	87.4
60 to 64 years	17	17	.156	.133	85.3	13	8	.175	.159	90.9
65 years and over	12	8	.148	.111	75.0	9	5	.158	.095	60.1
Others, reported as 16 years and over	3	28	.098	.128	130.6	....	10	....	.149	....
Others, reported as 21 years and over	289	705	.146	.133	91.1	217	292	.152	.131	86.2
Total[2]	3,860	8,060	.149	.136	91.3	2,244	2,703	.170	.151	88.8

[1] *Report on the Conditions, etc.*, vol. i, p. 314.

[2] The total includes those under sixteen years of age.

From the preceding table, it is evident that (1) women reach their maximum earning capacity at an earlier age than men; (2) at the age of 20 their earnings begin clearly to lag behind those of men; (3) when their wages are at a maximum they are nearly fifteen per cent less.

The same general points that have been made above are brought out in the inquiry into the men's ready-made clothing industry in Chicago, Rochester, and New York. In this industry, also, the range of wages is wider for men than for women; the earnings of women are far lower. In every city except Chicago more than half of the women were earning $4 or less, whereas half of the men earned $7 or less. In Rochester, one-third of the women earned $8 or more against four-fifths of the men. In New York, one-third of the women earned more than $7 as compared with over three-fourths of the men. In Chicago, where the earnings of men and women more closely approach, nearly one-half (46.7) of the women as compared with nearly two-thirds (64.5) of the men receive $7 or over. Finally, the proportion that women's wages form of men's varies considerably—from fifty-seven per cent in New York to sixty-nine per cent in Chicago.

Further evidence on the earnings of men and women as found in the silk industry is presented in the following table:

EARNINGS OF FEMALES AS PERCENTAGE OF EARNINGS OF MALES.[1]

Age.	New Jersey.					Pennsylvania.				
	Employees.		Earnings per hour.		Per cent of earnings of females of earnings of males.	Employees.		Earnings per hour.		Per cent of earnings of females of earnings of males.
	Male.	Female.	Male.	Female.		Male.	Female.	Male.	Female.	
16 years	26	96	.118	.106	89.9	7	176	.087	.079	90.8
17 years	22	92	.119	.121	101.7	7	116	.097	.085	87.6
18 years	24	82	.161	.140	87.0	6	86	.114	.089	78.1
19 years	19	76	.166	.138	83.1	1	47	.110	.094	(a)
20 years	19	57	.175	.158	90.3	2	34	.114	.098	(a)
21 years	15	47	.199	.164	82.4	.....	29	.....	.112	.....
22 years	21	49	.209	.163	78.0	1	22	.124	.128	(a)
23 years	17	49	.220	.163	74.1	1	22	.150	.120	(a)
24 years	8	41	.193	.179	92.7	1	9	.091	.117	(a)
25 to 34 years.	74	175	.215	.171	79.5	4	28	.254	.137	53.9
35 to 44 years.	74	70	.210	.164	77.0	7	6	.221	.135	61.1
45 to 54 years.	106	24	.218	.172	78.9	3	1	.233	.082	(a)
55 to 64 years.	30	3	.222	.151	68.0	2	1	.200	.091	(a)
65 years and over	3	.....	.200	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Total [2]	600	1,089	.169	.137	81.1	198	1,491	.081	.072	88.8

[1] *Report on the Condition, etc.*, vol. iv, p. 160.

[2] The total includes employees under sixteen years of age.

(a) Computation omitted because of small numbers.

In New Jersey—with the exception of the seventeen-year-old group, when girls earn a little more than boys—men uniformly earn more. At the age of eighteen and afterwards men earn more than women and their earnings increase at a more rapid rate. In the Pennsylvania mills the comparison is even less favorable to women.

Since very few men are engaged in the same occupations as women, the wage data from the *Report* refer to only a relatively small number of the total employed in the several industries. As a matter of fact, men and women rarely enter into direct competition with each other in comparable numbers. Where this competition occurs, it usually results in one or the other sex pre-empting the occupation. If women displace men, they usually work for lower wages than the men received. Or if—as occasionally happens—they receive the same wage, it is because it has been found that the men whose places they take have been able to get better-paying positions elsewhere.

The conclusion is plain that their wage scale marks women as a distinct class of workers. As adult workers their earnings always fall short of men's in the same age groups and finally their range of earnings is conspicuously more limited.

CHAPTER II

Wages and the Cost of Living

The relation of wages to the cost of living is perhaps the most critical test to which they can be subjected. When earnings fall below the sum required to maintain a reasonable standard of life, every one will agree that the situation calls for some kind of remedial action. We have adopted the phrase "normal standard of living" to express the irreducible minimum of requirements for physical, mental, and moral well-being. Anything less than the normal standard means lack of provision for simple, ordinary human needs. For some years now the test has been made through the study of family budgets. These indicated the extent to which male wage-earners were able to provide for their dependent wives and children. As a result of the minimum-wage movement, the same method of the budget has been applied in the field of individual expenditure among wage-earning women.

The cost of a normal standard of living for industrial women has been estimated by minimum wage boards and by minimum wage commissions, and wage decrees have been issued on this basis in Massachusetts, Washington, Oregon and Minnesota. Similar estimates have been made by investigating commissions in other states, but with the exception of New York they have not observed the same rigid methods of inquiry that have been imposed by the consideration of a practical application of their findings. The Minimum Wage Board for the brush industry in

Massachusetts estimated in 1914 that $8.71 per week was the minimum sum necessary for decent self-support of factory workers. In the state of Washington it was $8.90; in Oregon, $8.64 for factory workers in Portland, and $8.25 elsewhere; in Minnesota, $8.75 in first-class cities, $8.25 in second, third and fourth-class cities, and $8 elsewhere. The following figures show the itemized cost-of-living budgets for five trades investigated in Massachusetts up to the spring of 1917.

MASSACHUSETTS MINIMUM WAGE COMMISSION, ITEMIZED COST OF LIVING BUDGETS, AS VOTED ON BY MASSACHUSETTS WAGE BOARDS [1]

	Brush Board (January, 1914).	Candy Board (Summer, 1914).	Laundry Board (Winter, 1915).	Women's Clothing Board (Spring, 1916).	Men's Clothing Board (Spring, 1917).
Board and lodging	$5 25	$5 25	$5 25	$5 75	$5 50
Clothing	1 44	1 50	1 50	1 50	1 90
Laundry	50	45	50	25	35
Car fares	70	60	60	10	40
Doctor and dentist	20	25	25	25	25
Church	10	11	11	10	10
Newspapers and magazines	16	11	16	18	15
Vacation	19	20	20	25	25
Recreation	17	20	20	25	25
Savings	—	—	—	25	50
Incidentals	—	—	—	10	20
Organization dues	—	—	—	—	15
Insurance	—	—	—	—	—
Self-improvement	—	—	—	—	—
Total	$8 71	$8 67	$8 77	$8 98	$10 00

In order to get a clear idea of the meaning of these estimates and of their soundness we must examine the method by which they have been reached. The first point in the

[1] $8.75 was voted unanimously by the Candy Makers' Wage Board from the above budget as the necessary cost of living, allowing 8 cents extra for miscellaneous requirements.

inquiry concerns the items to be included in the budget. The absolute essentials of decent self-support as laid down by the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission for the Brush Makers' Wage Board are respectable lodging, three meals a day, suitable clothing, some provision for recreation, self-improvement and care of health. In making up the actual budget, the Board added laundry to these items and indicated that a true living wage should provide also for savings and insurance. The Industrial Welfare Commissions of Oregon and Washington and the Minimum Wage Commission of Minnesota include the same general items in the essentials of decent livelihood. But their decrees were based on estimates of the cost of living which included important additional provision for association dues and insurance. For example, the living wage fixed by the Washington Commission provided specifically for food, clothing, shelter, laundry, medicine and dentistry, street-car fare, newspapers and magazines, stationery and postage, association dues, insurance, vacation expenses, amusements, church and other contributions, and incidentals.

Not without a challenge of some of the items has the adoption been effected of this and similar budgets. There are those who think the use of the public library should eliminate provision for reading matter. One employer in Washington would include no amount for church dues because he did not believe "in taking church money from a working girl." Contributions to club, lodge, trade union, or Young Women's Christian Association are likely to be approved or frowned upon according to the personal equation. Allowance for savings or insurance invariably raises a discussion. There is also some difference of opinion as to the necessity of paying for recreation apart from that furnished by the social activities of church or lodge or free public recreation center. All these items have been, for

reasons more or less temperamental, disputed now here, now there. On the evidence of the wide inquiry in the states where legislation has been enacted or proposed, however, the concept of a decent livelihood, as expressed for example in the Washington budget, is a concept that can be defended in every item. Workingwomen and their employers and representatives of the public have approved it as reasonable and desirable, even when it has not been deemed expedient to include all its items in fixing a minimum wage. This has been indicated above in the opinion of the Brush Workers' Board that the wage they fixed was not a true living wage, since it made no allowance for savings or insurance. A wage which is insufficient to allow any provision for the future, or for any of the emergencies of sickness or unemployment that can be counted upon with a large degree of certainty by the average working girl, can hardly be called a living wage. Decent livelihood must include something more than the satisfaction of the elementary wants of food, clothing and shelter. It must also provide for those intellectual, social and spiritual needs common to normal human beings. Finally, it must offer some safeguard against "rainy days", some surplus that will protect against borrowing or slipping into a condition of dependency.

The problem of interpreting the items of decent living and putting them in terms of dollars and cents is one on which wage boards and commissions have spent much of their time. What is *respectable* lodging? What is *suitable* clothing? What an efficient dietary? Each item becomes a subject of controversy. Moreover, wage-earning women represent a variety of needs and obligations. A minority of them are dependent entirely upon their own efforts for support. In some localities, however, this is a considerable number. A few support not only themselves but others.

The majority live at home—a situation generally supposed to have a certain economic advantage. Should allowances be made for differences in these respects? They vary in age. Some spend their money wisely, others foolishly and wastefully. What is a necessity to one seems extravagance to another. These and similar considerations form a maze of circumstances from which a single estimate must be derived. What should this single estimate be?

The first group to take up the problem was the Brush Makers' Wage Board appointed after the investigation of the brush industry by the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission in 1913.[1] The board was made up of fifteen members, six representing manufacturers, six representing workers and three representing the public. The fact that the workers in only a single industry were involved simplified their task to that extent. At the outset the board assumed the case to be that of the individual woman dependent entirely upon her own efforts and living away from home in a lodging house. For such a woman, what sum would be necessary to insure decent living for a period of one year? In answering this question the board made use of three main sources of information: recent statistical material upon the subject; first-hand investigation — "the kind of inquiry which any individual seeking food, shelter and lodging is daily making"; and actual budgets of factory workers collected by the workers' representatives. The Federal investigation into the wages and living conditions of women in stores and factories, and Miss Bosworth's study of actual expenditures of 450 wage-earning women of all ranks were sources of concrete information about the ways of living of self-supporting women in Boston.

The board also had the estimate of a standard living

[1] *Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission, Bulletin no. 3,* Appendix No. I.

wage made by a conference of some thirty social workers of Boston. This group had estimated for the Commission on Minimum Wage Boards about two years previously "what it would cost a woman of average ability, initiative, and intelligence when living at home and also when living away from home, to secure the necessary comforts of life." [1] A most suggestive part of their report was the formulation of principles to be considered in determining the standard of living. For example, in the question of lodging for a woman not living at home, there should be a window in the room; the room should be larger than a hall bedroom, "because this room is her home, where she receives her friends of both sexes and passes her leisure"; it should be heated so that the woman does not have to rely upon an oil or gas stove for the sole heat. Finally, the standard should not require her to share the room with anyone else. If she is living at home, "the tenement should have as many rooms as there are members of the family when the rooms are very small," and "*the economic value of the mother's services as housekeeper should be recognized.*" With varying degrees of definiteness,[1] the conference set principles for food, clothing, laundry, health, and recreations expenditures. Food should be sufficient in quantity, quality and variety to preserve health. Its cost should not be based on more than one meal, breakfast, being cooked in the girl's room. The cost of clothing should not be based on the assumption that a working woman could make her own clothes in the evening. The cost of laundry should be based on her washing only the clothing that does not need to be ironed. Considerations of health must allow some expenditure for dentist, doctor and oculist. And there should be a two weeks' vacation in addition to weekly recreation.

[1] *Report of the Commission on Minimum Wage Boards* (Boston, 1912), p. 222 *et seq.*

These data, much of which will be seen to be merely negative, and other data bearing in a more general way upon the standard and cost of living were used to aid the board in their decision. Together with the first-hand inquiries made by some of the members of the board and the estimates of the workers of their own cost of living, there was thus available a fund of information out of which the board could construct a standard of living and its cost, representative not of the opinion or personal prejudice of a single group of individuals but of a consensus of different points of view.

The Industrial Welfare Commission of Washington followed somewhat the same method in carrying the minimum wage law into effect. They describe their policy as follows: [1]

Some 30,000 blank forms were either mailed or distributed personally to as many employers and employees, requesting estimates as to the cost of living in the different localities in which they lived, as contemplated by the thirty different items entering into the reasonable annual expenses of a self-supporting woman; personal investigations were made by members of the Commission and by several paid investigators; and lastly, sixteen informal conferences were held at various points in the State with employers and employees in the mercantile, manufacturing and laundry industries. In this way a vast amount of detailed information regarding these industries was collected and compiled.

This information was placed before six different conferences made up of three representatives each of employers, employees and the public. Usually after the discussion in the larger group, a committee of three took up the estimates and "by further discussion, comparison, and compromise

[1] *Industrial Welfare Commission, Washington. First Biennial Report*, p. 91.

reached a conclusion on each item if possible, or at least on the allowance that should be made for all the items, and it was on that allowance that the minimum wage was based." Estimates of the annual cost of self-support were made in this way for six different occupational groups—mercantile, factory, laundry, telephone and telegraph, hotel and restaurant, and office workers. Only in the conference on the telephone and telegraph workers was their marked difference of opinion on the question of what should constitute self-support. Here the public view differed decidedly from that of employees and employers. Employees joined the employers in the contention that an allowance should be made for the girls who lived at home, since part of their living expenses was thus borne by their parents; on the other hand, the members representing the public maintained that parents should not be called upon to subsidize an industry that did not pay a living wage. The latter carried their point, but a spirited discussion of the issue was necessary. But this agreement of the former groups was unusual.

With only one other exception (office employees), members representing the disinterested public were always called upon " to exercise the mission of compromise in order to bring the employer and employee closer together in their estimates." The final decision was thus not the contention of a single group but was modified by " comparison, discussion and compromise."

The same general plan of getting information from employers and employees on the cost of living, and supplementing it by personal investigation, was pursued by the Industrial Welfare Commission of Oregon and the Minnesota Minimum Wage Commission. In Oregon the commission organized conferences of employers, employees and the public to consider, among other questions, the sum required to maintain a self-supporting woman in frugal but

decent conditions of living in Portland and in industrial towns outside of Portland. The recommendations of these conferences were presented at public hearings before they were adopted by the commission and embodied in the order to manufacturers. In Minnesota the commission collected information by personal interviews with working women and by questionnaires circulated through employers and labor unions. Eight thousand of these latter were filled out and returned to the commission from four different cities. The secretary of the commission made a personal investigation into the cost of living in some nine of the smaller industrial cities, and advisory boards of employers and employees in manufacturing and mercantile pursuits were appointed by the commission in Duluth, Minneapolis, and St. Paul. These advisory boards submitted recommendations on the cost of living sufficient to maintain health and to provide the necessary comforts and conditions of reasonable life.

These four states, Massachusetts, Washington, Oregon and Minnesota, are the only ones in which the minimum cost of living has been determined by authorities empowered to make it a basis of wages. It has been possible to get substantial agreement on what constitutes the absolute essentials of decent living and the cost of procuring them. In every item the estimates seem to have been pared down to the lowest possible figure. In every instance the budget has been submitted to wide, varied and exacting scrutiny.

Assuming, then, the accuracy of the estimates, a comparison of earnings with the cost of a reasonable standard of living has revealed the fact that a large proportion of women wage-earners make less than enough for independent support. In Massachusetts in the brush industry, nearly nine-tenths (88.7) of the workers received less than eight dollars a week. In corsets, hosiery and knit goods, and

paper boxes, about three-fourths earned under that amount. In the candy trade, nearly eighty-five per cent, and in the making of women's ready-made clothing, seventy per cent were in that same wage group. The same story is repeated with slight variation wherever wages and the cost of living have been compared. In Washington over three-fifths (61.7) received less than the $8.90 declared there to be the living wage. In Portland, Oregon, nearly one-half (48.1) of some four hundred representative factory workers received under eight dollars a week. In the first and second-class cities of Minnesota over one-half (53.8) of the factory women earned under that amount. According to the wages prevailing between May and September, 1914, in Minneapolis, St. Paul and Duluth, over forty per cent received under eight dollars.

It is thus sufficiently obvious that unless they can get some supplement to their wages the girls who are earning less than a living wage have to practise an undesirable and unwholesome economy. They have to stint on food, on clothing, on amusement, on living quarters. Furthermore, they can make no provision whatever for savings. Not even the most intelligent planning can make the inadequate wage provide for normal immediate needs. Instead, the girl who lives in lodgings must live on a plane where physical vitality and efficiency are persistently undermined.

Nor is the girl who lives at home any better off. It is true that the great majority of girls, and especially girls in the lowest wage groups, live at home, and it has been generally assumed that "there was a male breadwinner successfully performing his allotted task, and any earnings of wife and daughter were pin-money added to his steady income." But the data that have been accumulated in wage inquiries during the last ten years have shown no foundation in fact for the pin-money theory of women's earnings.

On the contrary, they make clear that the overwhelming majority of wage-earning girls, at least three-fourths, contribute all of their earnings to the family purse. Over twenty per cent more give part of their earnings. Not infrequently there is no adult male wage-earner in the family. The Factory Investigating Commission reported that among the factory girls interviewed in New York City approximately one-fifth were "in households which altogether lacked the natural support of a male over 18 years of age." [1] A negligible number of wage-earning girls—not more than three per cent—retain all of their earnings for themselves. The earnings of a girl who lives at home can almost never, then, be reckoned as "pin money".

Another question, however, arises. Is there not, at least, an economic advantage in living at home? It has been pointed out above that the cost of living has been constructed on the basis of the girl who is "adrift", that is, living away from home. The Massachusetts Brush Workers' Board seriously considered this question. This was not done, however, by a comparison of the actual cost of living at home and adrift, because they frankly admitted that the almost universal lack of family accounting makes it almost impossible to tell just what is the individual's cost of living in this way. They held, nevertheless, that if allowance were made for a woman's share of the rent, furniture, light, heat, the mother's labor at a fair wage, and other items of common expense, the difference between her expenses and those of the woman living independently would be less than is commonly supposed. Many personal items would, of course, be as large in one case as in the other. Moreover, a woman's obligation to aid her family will more likely be demanded if she is living with them. A fall of family in-

[1] *State Factory Investigating Commission. Fourth Report,* vol. iv, p. 1490.

come, too, would involve all members of the family. Risk is greater, and therefore the margin of safety should be greater in the case of the family. The general conclusion of the Brush Workers' Board was to discount the advantage of living at home.

In Washington, where separate conferences were held in different occupations, the telephone and telegraph conference showed, as has been said, a marked difference among its members on this subject. Employers, passively endorsed by employees, contended that consideration should be given to the fact that the majority of the girls lived at home and that part of their living expenses were borne by their parents. The members representing the public strongly dissented from this point of view and stood out against recognizing the right of industry to this subsidy. Their point of view finally prevailed.

In the New York State study of the cost of living, too, most careful thought was given to this question: Is the lot of the woman living at home better or worse than the one who lives independently? An examination of working girls' budgets shows that girls that live at home give, as a rule, more to their families than the others pay for board and lodging. On the other hand, the girl who lives at home invariably has a refund for clothes and amusement. "Where the balance of advantage lies," said Mr. Streightoff, who made the study, "it is impossible to say. Numbers of girls living at home are subsidized. Other numbers, probably as large, are virtual slaves to the family need." [1] In estimating the comparative cost of board and lodging for the girl living at home and the girl living independently, Mr. Streightoff concluded that "the only savings that may arise from living at home are, first, that the mother gives

[1] *State Factory Investigating Commission. Fourth Report*, vol. iv, p. 1543.

her labor, and, second, that no profit is necessary. In New York City," he said, " there seems to be very little difference in the accommodations enjoyed by girls boarding with strangers and by those living with their own people." The mother's labor, he maintained, should be considered in the light of its economic value. If this were done, and the omission of profit conceded, he asserted that " the only difference between the real cost of board and lodging of those living at home and of those living independently can be put at approximately fifty cents " in favor of the former.[1] If the girl is earning less than enough to maintain a normal standard of living, the only economic advantage of living in a family group would be derived from the fact that the other members of the family have surplus incomes, *i. e.*, incomes that exceed individual requirements and that can make up for her deficit. But studies of the cost of living of wage-earners' families and statistics of men's wages make it impossible to assume that the families are numerous in which the girl can count on the surplus income of some one else to make up the deficiencies of her own. Families in which a normal standard of living obtains and where the daughters are at work in manufacturing establishments are probably very exceptional. If, then, the family plane of living is below the minimum requirements of a normal standard, it is apparent that the fact that a wage-earning girl lives at home does not assure her the necessities of a decent and reasonable existence. And that, after all, is the prime consideration. Living at home under these circumstances simply means sharing the common adversity. It involves the undermining of physical efficiency by curtailing expenditure for clothing, amusement and recreation. In large families and in families where lodgers are taken, it means a degree of overcrowding that denies a reasonable standard

[1] *State Factory Investigating Commission, op. cit.*, p. 1568.

of comfort. In brief, if the home is as poor as the girl, the assumption is untenable that through its agency she can stretch her meager earnings to provide the minimum necessities of life. Thus, from the evidence at present available, it would appear that whatever other values there may be in living at home, judgment must be at least suspended on the economic value.

Those girls who do not live at home usually find their way into private families, sometimes with their friends, or into low-priced boarding or lodging houses. Very few factory workers live in the subsidized homes for working girls. "It seems impossible," says one investigator, "for these homes to draw at the same time girls from different industrial planes, both because of the impossibility of their paying the same amounts for board and because of the difference in social status, the clerical and office workers invariably feeling above the store girls, and the store girls in turn above the factory girls." [1] It is more often the case that the factory worker adrift lives with some poor family at very low cost. Not infrequently she becomes one of the family and makes up in work for the small amount of board she can pay. Generally the standard of living is low. There is enough crowding to destroy all privacy. Often her bedroom is shared with other lodgers or members of the family. The plane of living falls far short of that required by a normal standard.

These effects of an environment where physical vitality is persistently undermined are not limited to the individual herself. *Since most women wage-earners are potential mothers, the future health of the race itself is at stake.* The physical condition of children is markedly influenced by that of the mother. Hence, the question of women's

[1] *Report on the Condition of Woman and Child Wage-earners*, vol. v, p. 70.

wages inadequate to support a normal standard of living becomes a social question of even greater importance. There is also the special danger that low wages will be a menace to morality. No other phase of the wages question has provoked so much controversy as this and probably no other argument has carried such weight in the demand for increased wages. From the mass of material collected by vice commissions and industrial investigators, the economic connection between inadequate earnings and occasional or regular prostitution is clearly established. It is, however, but one factor in a maze of complex circumstances, and its importance is extremely difficult to determine exactly. Some will underrate its influence; others will emphasize and stress it. The consensus of opinion is that as a direct and immediate cause of going wrong, low wages are an almost negligible factor, but that indirectly their influence is marked and disastrous.[1] The conclusion to which Miss Conyngton came from her investigation of the relation between occupation and criminality may be applied to all the evidence available.

It was generally agreed, [says Miss Conyngton], that while it is the rarest of things for a girl to enter upon an immoral life *directly* [italics mine] through want, yet when she has once gone wrong through thoughtlessness or affection or from any other cause, then low wages, or irregular or insufficient wages are strongly effective in deciding her to adopt a life of promiscuous immorality, or in impelling her to drift into such a life without any definite decision. When the question was shifted to the *indirect* [italics mine] effect of low wages and poverty, the answer was different. The girls were living at home in so many cases that the discussion necessarily dealt rather with the family income than with the girl's im-

[1] *Report on the Condition of Woman and Child Wage-earners*, vol. xv, p. 93.

mediate wages. Poverty whether it be the result of a low family income or of insufficient wages of a girl living by herself touches the question of immorality in many ways. It decides the girl's companionships, her amusements, her ability to gratify without danger her natural and reasonable tastes, her very capacity for resistance to temptation. Its physical effects open the way to moral dangers.[1]

To many it may seem a waste of time and mere quibbling to discuss the exact character of the relation between wages and sexual immorality. Probably not a few of us have been astonished in public conferences to see the fervor and agitation with which the assertion of the *direct* influence is repudiated and the comparative equanimity with which a statement of the *indirect* influence can be received. Expressed in its least offensive form, it still remains a factor to be reckoned with as an outcome of wages too low to meet the requirements of decent livelihood.

To sum up, we may say that the wages of a substantial majority of industrial women fall short of the amount required to maintain a normal standard of life. If a normal standard is maintained under the circumstances, it must be by aid received from other sources. To this extent industrial women at present fail of self-support. Lacking such aid, the deficit is shown in a lowering of vitality and efficiency, a menace to the welfare of women both as individuals and as potential mothers; and if such aid be present, it is often at the cost of undermining social and moral standards.

[1] *Report on the Condition of Woman and Child Wage-earners*, vol. xv, p. 93.

CHAPTER III

Factors Affecting Women's Wages

The marked disparity between the wages of women and those of men can be largely traced to influences peculiar to women's experience in the industrial world. In the first place, the majority of women workers are young and are engaged in wage-earning occupations only in those years between leaving school and getting married. Thus, their age grouping is in marked contrast to that of men. Nearly one-third (30.8) of the women workers reported in the census of 1910 were under 21 years of age, against only one-sixth (16.5) of the men workers. With few exceptions, in the twenty-seven industries studied for the *Federal Report on the Condition of Women and Child Wage-earners*, from two-thirds to three-fourths of the women employed were under 25. In every industry there was a marked concentration in the age group sixteen and seventeen. The predominant age period—that is, the year when the greatest number of workers is employed—varies little in different industries or in different parts of the country. In the New England cotton mills there was about the same number of employees at the ages of 18 and 21. In Virginia 16 was the dominant age, and in each of the other Southern cotton states 18 was the age of the largest number at work. In the cotton mills of the South, a rapid decline in numbers follows the age of 18. In the North a similarly rapid decline begins at the age of 21; at 22 the number is a quarter less; at 24 the number has decreased to less than one-half that at 21.

In the men's ready-made clothing trade, the largest number of women found at work at any single age was 17 and 18, and the numbers at those ages were exactly the same. After 18 the numbers decline. Between 20 and 21 the sharpest drop comes. At 21 the number is only two-thirds that at 20. At the age of 22 is found less than one-half the number at 18, and at 24 only one-fourth of that number. So brief is the stay of women in the clothing industry. From three to nine years make up their wage-earning period.

In summarizing the twenty-three industries less intensively studied, the Federal *Report* puts the matter of age as follows: [1]

> The real rush into industrial employment seems to begin at sixteen at which age nearly one-tenth of the whole group were found. For two years the number coming in exceeds those going out, the number in any one-year age group reaching its maximum at 18. At 19 the number begins to fall off and thenceforth the decrease is rapid. . . . So far as this group of workers can be taken as typical it appears that about one in ten begins her industrial life before she is 16, about one in four continues it after she is 25 and approximately one in seven keeps on after 30, for the great majority the period of industrial life lies between 15 and 25 years of age.[2]

The constant exodus of women after the age of 21 and the recruiting from the younger girls, gives to this group of workers a high degree of instability and a large proportion of youth and inexperience. Such a group is naturally re-

[1] *Report on the Condition of Woman and Child Wage-earners*, 61st Cong., 2d Sess., Senate Document no. 645, vol. xviii, p. 20.

[2] Of course this cannot be accepted conclusively as evidence that those at the age of 30 or over have been in industry continuously. For many who drop out at 19 or 20 may return between 25 and 30 or even later.

stricted to the simplest and most elementary kind of work. As a matter of fact, a review of the occupations in which women are employed is, for the majority, a review of one unskilled or semi-skilled occupation after another. Their labor in factories and workshops is of the lower grades involving neither special knowledge nor training.

In the cotton textile industry, for example, women are employed in nine of the fourteen principal processes. But their real importance from the standpoint of the work they do is indicated by the fact that in New England 75.3 per cent and in the South 86.9 per cent are in six occupations. Nearly two-thirds in New England are ringspinners, speeder tenders, and weavers. In the South nearly three-fourths are ringspinners, spoolers, and weavers.[1]

The chief work of the ringspinner is tending the spindles in the ringspinning process. It consists of watching for broken threads, which are joined by a twist of the wrist and the fingers. No special mechanical knowledge is needed. Spinners do not even oil the machines. That and the repair work are in the hands of men. No great physical strength is needed—only a constant watchfulness to detect the broken threads, and the dexterity quickly acquired by nimble fingers to mend them. It is in point to contrast it with another type of spinning—mule-spinning—in which only men engage. The machine used in this process is a very complicated one, requiring much mechanical skill to keep properly adjusted. To mend the broken threads involves bending far over a moving carriage, which makes the work unsuitable for women. The danger of their skirts being caught in the moving machinery further disqualifies them for this well-paid occupation.

[1] There is a difference between the North and the South in the distribution of women within these occupations due to character of goods manufactured and difference in character of labor supply.

Speeder tenders have to lift bobbins of roving, sometimes large and heavy, to a height 5½ to 6 feet above the floor, mend broken threads and remove the filled bobbins. This work, like that of spooling, entails a certain amount of physical strain if a woman has only ordinary strength—but neither process makes any demand upon knowledge or judgment.

Finally there is weaving, the most important occupation numerically and the best paid of those in which women are employed. It embraces about one-third of the women in the industry and is often ranked as a skilled trade. The weaver must detect broken threads and mend them, keep the shuttles filled and place them in the looms. The number of looms that can be tended properly depends upon the skill of the weaver and the type of loom. Recent inventions, such as the stop-motion loom, reduce the strain upon the weaver by causing the loom to stop automatically when the thread breaks. Although weaving is often ranked as a skilled trade, experience, carrying with it the capacity to tend many looms, would seem to be the chief element of skill required, for children as well as men and women are employed as weavers. In North Carolina mills investigated by the Federal agents, twelve per cent of the female weavers were under sixteen years of age.

In the men's ready-made clothing trade, which ranks next to cotton in the number of women employed, hand sewing—the actual needle work on the garment—is women's largest field of work. Roughly, the employees in this highly subdivided industry may be separated into machine operators and hand sewers of higher and lower grades. From two-thirds to five-sixths of the women are in the latter groups. The number varies in the different centers of the trade. Over one-half of the women in New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore, and over four-tenths of those in Chicago

and Rochester were doing the lowest-paid work in the trade, the simplest kind of hand sewing.

In tobacco manufactures and in the canning and preserving industry, further evidence of the kind of work done by women is found. Each of them employed over 75,000 women at the Census of 1905. The manufacture of tobacco is divided into three great branches, cigarettes, cigars, and smoking and chewing tobacco. Cigarette-making employs the smallest number of men and women. It is chiefly a machine industry, but there are a number of light hand operations in which a large number of women and girls are employed as hand workers as well as tenders of light machines. They make up about two-thirds of the force. "Practically none of the female wage-earners can be called skilled. In many of the operations performed by them a brief training is required, but there is no operation in which the necessary knowledge cannot be gained in a few weeks." [1] In the making of cigars, women predominate almost everywhere in the unskilled work. There are a few skilled workers but they form a very small proportion of the total group. Judging from the conditions found in the Federal investigation, they are increasing in numbers in the industry, but they are not gaining in the skilled occupations. Rather this increase is due to the growing use of machines where little training, intelligence or strength is required on the part of the operator. Similarly in the making of smoking and chewing tobacco "the occupation of the women may be learned, as a rule, in from a week to two months, according to the worker's intelligence. After that speed may be gained but there is little possibility of advance." [2] The same lack of skill characterizes women's work in the canning and preserving of fruits, vegetables and oysters.

[1] *Report on Condition, etc.*, vol. xviii, p. 77.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 308-309, 321.

"None of the work done by women can be called more than semi-skilled, and in most cases it is frankly unskilled. Speed is demanded and a certain dexterity gained by practise, but nothing more." [1] The more responsible parts of the work, which include the actual cooking of the vegetables and fruits or the compounding of relishes, are all done by men.

To sum up, the great majority of women in industry are engaged in tending machinery, or in performing simple mechanical operations. Occupations that require unusual speed and accuracy, experience, training, physical strength and endurance, mechanical knowledge, or special responsibility are carried on by men. Those that require neither special knowledge nor training, but only watchfulness, deftness, or the capacity to do a given thing over and over again, —those are the occupations to which women and girls are confined. Their wages, therefore, are the wages of the very lowest grades of work.

It is to be noted, further, that even within this unfavorable field of earnings the majority of women do not remain at work long enough to reach their maximum earning capacity. In the cotton textile industry, hourly earnings were computed in Massachusetts mills by detailed age groups. Taking all occupations and beginning at 16 years of age, there is a steady increase from 10.8 cents an hour to 14.1, which is reached at the age of 22. This falls at 23 to 13.8, but returns at 24 to 14.1 and increases steadily to the maximum of 15.4 cents. This is reached in the age group 35-39 and maintained in the period 40-44, after which it declines. In this group are only twelve per cent of the total number of women 16 years of age and over. Seventy-two per cent were under the age of maximum earnings, and of this group 45.71 per cent were in the age group 16-23. Considering a

[1] *Report on Condition, etc.*, vol. xviii, pp. 40-41.

single occupation, that of weaving, the age of maximum efficiency is 35-39, an age group in which only nine per cent of the weavers are found.

The tendency for earnings to increase with age is indicated in the figures taken from studies made in the cotton and silk industries, and given in Chapter I.[1] Earnings increase from the low to the high-wage groups with a fair degree of regularity. In New Jersey in the silk industry maximum hourly earnings were recorded at the age of 24 as 17.9 cents an hour, and at the ages 25-34 as 17.1. Then comes a slight drop in the group 35-44, 16.4 cents, followed by a return to 17.2 cents an hour for the group 45-54. The small number of individuals in the last group, however, invalidates the significance of their earnings. It is probably warranted to fix the period from 24-34 years as the period of maximum earnings. In Pennsylvania maximum earnings are apparently made in the same age period, though it should be noted that the data are based on a smaller number than in New Jersey. The following figures show for a much larger group in the Pennsylvania mills the variation of earnings with age in the wider age groups.

PER CENT OF FEMALE EMPLOYEES IN SILK MILLS IN PENNSYLVANIA IN CLASSIFIED AGE GROUPS EARNING LESS THAN SPECIFIED AMOUNTS IN A REPRESENTATIVE WEEK

Age group.	Employees.		Per cent of total in age group earning—			
	Number.	Per cent in age group.	Under $4.	Under $6.	Under $8.	Under $10.
16 and 17 years	1,569	28.7	58.4	92.1	98.3	99.9
18 to 20 years	1,243	22.7	36.0	76.3	91.6	98.8
21 years and over	1,410	25.8	16.2	42.0	71.4	89.6
Total, 16 years and over.	4,522	77.2	37.7	70.7	87.4	96.2

[1] *Cf. supra*, pp. 31, 33. [2] *Report on the Condition, etc.*, vol. iv, p. 157.

Here there is apparent a steady decrease in the lower wage groups accompanied by a steady increase in the higher. Unlike the cotton textile industry, the rate of increase is much greater between the ages of 18 to 20 years and 21 and over than between the ages 16 and 17 and 18 to 20. Age or a continued stay in the industry, or perhaps both, have a greater influence upon earnings.

In the men's ready-made clothing trade, earnings were computed only on a weekly basis and for Chicago alone.[1] The results show a very rapid increase in earnings between the ages of 16 and 21, an increase of $2.57, or nearly fifty per cent. Between the ages of 21, and 35-39, the period of maximum earnings, wages are relatively stable, increasing by only sixty-eight cents. After that they decline. In the glass industry, maximum earnings are recorded for the age group 25-29. Up to that age there is a steady and appreciable increase in weekly earnings. Beyond it there is a sharp falling-off. Finally, in twenty-three other representative industries there is in each industry a steady increase in earnings up to the age of 20.[2] In the two other age groups, "21-24" and "25 and over," the sequence is frequently irregular. With only two exceptions, however, and those involving comparatively small numbers, each industry shows an increased earning power up to the age of twenty-four, and the largest proportion of those earning as much as ten dollars a week were in the age group twenty-five years and over.

It follows, then, from the decline in numbers which has been noted at the age of 21, that a large proportion of young women do not stay in industrial work long enough to make the maximum earnings in even the lowest-paid group of occupations. They leave before they secure the

[1] *Report on the Condition, etc.*, vol. ii, p. 155.

[2] *Ibid.*, vol. xviii, p. 25.

rewards of experience even in the grade of occupations in which they are employed.

Another influence that has tended to depress women's wages has been the absence of collective bargaining. The great majority of women are unorganized. In common with all unskilled labor in America, they have felt the indifference of the organized labor movement. To this has been added the obstacles to organization peculiar to young and temporary workers. Although, as we shall see later on, the trade-union movement among women is much stronger than is commonly supposed, nevertheless the great majority of girls and young women are without its defenses.

It is, of course, impossible to say exactly what effect the absence of trade-unionism has upon the level of wages—how much higher it would be if women were a well-organized working group. Undoubtedly, the lack of organization with established rates of pay accounts in part for the complete absence of standards in women's wages frequently noted in industrial inquiries.[1]

When it comes to the question of earnings [reports a Federal investigator], the lack of standardization seems to reach its height. . . . The determining factor seemed not so much what their (women's) services were worth or what the industry could afford as *the individual employer's attitude upon the matter*. In one and the same industry employers would be found who so graded their rates that the average employee would be able to earn fair wages, the unusual employee, of course, under such a system, earning very good wages; employers who took foreign women because they could get them for lower wages than American women and employers who sought girls under sixteen for all the occupations they could fill on the admitted ground that "they could do as much as a woman and would work for less." In many cases there

[1] *Report on the Condition, etc.*, vol. xviii, p. 36.

was an evident intention to treat employees justly and considerately, but nowhere was there any generally accepted standard of what constituted a fair or reasonable wage. What a woman could earn by a week's work seemed to depend fully as much upon extrinsic factors over which she had no possible control as upon her own ability or her own efforts.

Writing of the artificial flower industry in New York City, Miss Van Kleeck says:

the fixing of wage seems indeed to be a matter of chance. It was described by a forewoman who said that although a definite percentage of the price was always allowed for salesmen's pay and firm's profits, the wage rate was determined by the forewoman's guess. *She made it as low as possible without causing a spontaneous uprising in the workroom.*[1]

In the Federal inquiry into the glass industry "the fact of frequent wage variation from factory to factory" is reported as "the most significant single fact to be noted in an analysis of women's wages."[2] For this industry a comparison was made of the wages paid in four unskilled occupations where there was a close similarity of working conditions in a series of factories within a radius of fifty miles of the most central one. In three of the four the highest wage paid by the establishment at one extreme was over double that paid by the establishment at the other. In the fourth occupation the difference was but very little short of 100 per cent. "Among the more skilled occupations the variations were not so great as among unskilled occupations, but the same tendency was everywhere found to exist. Among women glass workers there is no such thing as a level of occupational wage even within a very limited territory."[3] Another instance may be cited from the men's

[1] Van Kleeck, *Artificial Flowermakers*, p. 67. The italics are mine.

[2] *Report on the Condition, etc.*, vol. iii, pp. 409-410.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 408 *et seq.*

ready-made clothing industry where lower-grade hand sewers doing the same work on coats received two cents more an hour in Chicago and Rochester than they did in New York and Baltimore. Hand sewers of the higher grades received over three cents more an hour.[1] Operators in Chicago received over five cents more an hour than in New York. The report calls direct attention to "the absence of what might be called a standard wage in the industry." This applies to both men and women and to piece and time rates. "There are no standard rates or standard earnings in the sense in which there are day rates for unskilled labor or definite rates in highly skilled trades, such as the printing trade."[2]

With women left to the field of individual bargaining, we have the play of forces that inevitably tend toward the lowering of wages. The well-recognized inequality of bargaining power is especially marked in the case of girls and young women, and hence the fixing of their wage under these conditions is left to the crudest working of the principle of supply and demand.

Finally, between men and women, there is a recognized difference of economic status and function that has a far-reaching effect upon wages. The economic status of the great majority of women to-day is that of dependents. If a father's income is ample to provide for the family wants, including the support of wife and daughters, the girls as a rule will not go out to work for wages. Men the bread-winners, and women the homemakers; men the producers, and women the consumers or dispensers of income; such appears the "natural" economic basis of the family and the relation of the sexes. But as a matter of fact the division of function exists in its entirety among a steadily

[1] *Report on the Condition, etc.*, vol. ii, p. 185.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 194.

dwindling social class. For it requires the possession of economic resources much larger than those of the average wage-earner to support a wife, and daughters also, who are completely exempted from gainful employment. The returns of the last census show that four out of every ten girls between the ages of 16 and 20 were working for wages, and one woman out of every four between the ages of 21 and 44.

Although the breakdown of the status of economic dependence is going on rapidly in the case of the unmarried woman, it can hardly be said, at least in the United States, to have affected that of the married. Even in theory the desirability of combining wage-earning with matrimony is advocated, one might say, by professional women alone. Certainly it has found no footing among girls who work in factories. To them marriage means a release from wage-earning to enter upon the real vocation of women, the care of home and husband and children, and our social institutions at the present time make no combination of home duties and factory work for married women either desirable in theory or attractive in practise. This division of function between men and women has an important bearing upon their respective wage-earning interests. Its influence may be seen in the restriction of women's opportunity when they come into competition with men and in the opposition that meets their employment in what is regarded as men's work — a classification of work, be it noted, based largely on custom. An example of this recently has received wide publicity in the decision of the War Labor Board recommending the discharge of a number of women who had been working as conductors on the Cleveland street railways in response to a threatened strike of the men employed in a similar capacity. The action of the men was taken in spite of the fact that the women were working

under regular union conditions and had qualified for admission into the men's union, which was, however, refused. The Cleveland case may be regarded as a drastic expression of the point of view stated by various labor unions that women should withdraw from the industrial work they had taken up in war time and return to those home duties that constitute their proper sphere of labor.

Industrial investigators have frequently pointed out the tendency of women to yield the better-paying positions to men when there is any real degree of competition between them. For instance, in the manufacture of silk, the three most highly skilled and best paid occupations are weaving, warping and twisting-in.[1] In Paterson, N. J., of some 3500 men and women engaged in these occupations, forty per cent (39.1) were women, whereas of some 1400 doing the same kind of work in the Pennsylvania factories, ninety per cent were women. The explanation of this fact may be found in the different occupational opportunities for men in the two regions. In Pennsylvania, silk factories have been purposely established in the anthracite coal counties of Lackawanna and Luzerne. Prior to their coming there were no manufacturing industries. Mining absorbed all the male labor and practically continued to do so even after the advent of the factory. Thus it has happened that there has been no real degree of competition between men and women. And women not only predominate in the skilled processes, but they also work in occupations not considered fit for women. For example, only 18 women and girls were found as spinners in the Paterson mills, as against 729 in Pennsylvania.

This marked difference between the localities [says the Federal Report],[2] is due largely to the fact that in Paterson the work

[1] *Report on the Condition, etc.*, vol. iv, p. 55.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 194.

of a spinner is considered a man's work, and this is the belief of not only the operatives generally, but of practically every throwster in that city. With only a few exceptions the opinion of the throwsters was that spinning was much too hard and unhealthful work for women and girls. Another factor of considerable importance is that there are numerous opportunities for employment in less arduous and equally remunerative occupations in shirt factories, stores, etc. The Paterson girls can be somewhat independent in their choice of employments. On the other hand in small localities in Pennsylvania where the industry has been newly established *there is no sentiment and no settled custom on the subject of women and children in specified occupations.* (Italics mine.) In addition there always has been an abundant supply of women and girls seeking employment in the silk mills which were at the outset, in most cases the only factory.

In Pennsylvania the women get a chance even in the supervisory positions. In Paterson those in charge of factory rooms are mostly men; in Pennsylvania they are chiefly young women.

In the men's ready-made clothing trade, as we have already noted, the important occupations are generally in the hands of men, but this distribution varies in different cities. Compare, for example, Chicago and New York in respect of operating. Four-fifths (79.3) of the operators in Chicago were women, whereas only a little more than one-fifth (22.4) were doing this work in New York. In Chicago it appears that men find a larger field of employment in the machine-shops, slaughtering and meat-packing houses, and they leave tailoring and needlework to women. Moreover, they are of the races, chiefly Poles and Bohemians, who are more ready to do hard physical work than are the Jews who dominate the industry in New York. Thus this field of work is chiefly in the hands of women. They make up nearly fifty-eight per cent of the total working group and

they have a chance at the better-paid occupations. In New York, on the other hand, the preference of Jews for the men's ready-made clothing industry, added to the fact that large numbers of Jewish tailors from Europe have settled here, has given an abundant supply of male labor and it monopolizes the well-paid occupations. Of the women employed in this industry in New York, about two-thirds were Italians, only two per cent of whom were born in the United States. Jewish women have found employment in other branches of the sewing trades, leaving the ready-made clothing to men and "to such women as are handicapped by their ignorance of English, recency of immigration and other causes for competition in other trades."

The same division of economic function restricts the opportunity of girls for vocational — that is wage-earning — education. Vocational education — so-called — for girls is advocated along the lines of homemaking activities, cooking and sewing. In so far as it goes beyond these boundaries, it is confined to trades in which women already predominate. It enables them to take their place in a few occupations with some advantage in formal training over other girls who take up the same kind of work. It is in no degree based on widening the choice of vocations beyond what is customarily considered women's work.

In so far as trade education is a matter of practical training within the industry, employers will not think it worth while to offer girls the same opportunities as boys. Fitness for the work, strictly speaking, is not considered. The chance that is offered girls will be determined in part by the fact that employers do not look upon women as permanent wage-earners.

From another standpoint, labor legislation has emphasized the same point of view. In industrial employment women's freedom of contract as a wage-earner has been re-

peatedly restricted to safeguard her function as child-bearer. The number of hours she may work, her exclusion from employment in certain industries, the compulsory unemployment periods before and after child-birth—such measures have been enacted by the legislatures and upheld by the courts for the greater stake the community has in women as mothers. Although courts have not been entirely unanimous in this attitude, the general trend of judicial opinion is that difference of sex function and difference of economic status afford sufficient justification for differentiating the constitutional rights of men and women as citizens.

Women, thus, are a distinct class of wage-earners. They are as a group young and inexperienced, and hence predominate in the lower grades of work; they stay in industry a comparatively brief time, too brief to reach the maximum earnings possible in even their own types of work; they cannot rely to any extent upon a strong organization to defend or promote their interests; and, finally, their economic status in the family, closely connected as it is with their child-bearing function, contributes a further restriction upon their vocational opportunity.

The outcome of the whole situation is that the industrial employment of girls becomes subject to peculiar and distinctive influences that operate to hold their wages at a low level—lower than would result from the working of purely economic forces. Custom and tradition in themselves dictate the offer of lower wages to women than to men and put definite limits to their occupational opportunity. The condition under which they work induces its own psychology into their attitude. In the absence of any counteracting influence the working girl to-day tends to accept social institutions as she finds them and adapts herself to the restrictions they impose. Her reaction is in this event largely determined by them. She will take low wages with

docility and will struggle with their inadequacy by resorting to all sorts of economies. She will rely upon the unpaid services of her mother and the favors of other relatives or friends to supplement her scanty earnings. Industrial grievances, if not too oppressive, will be mitigated by the thought of the release that marriage will bring, and, economically speaking, her future will be bound up with a chance to marry well rather than with advancement in the factory.

No argument is needed to demonstrate the danger to general wage standards that inheres in such a class of workers—a class, be it noted, that is rapidly enlarging its boundaries in modern machine industry. Various agencies are at work to combat this danger. In the following chapters it is my purpose to outline what seem to me the most important of these agencies and to attempt their evaluation from the standpoint of the peculiar influences to which the wages of women are subject.

CHAPTER IV

Minimum Wage Legislation: Its Scope and Character

In the past few years, minimum wage legislation has rapidly come to the fore in this country as a solution of the problem of women's wages. The movement may be dated from the enactment of a minimum-wage law in Massachusetts, June 4, 1912, which went into effect July 1, 1913. During 1913, eight other states passed similar legislation—Utah (May 13), Oregon (June 2), Washington (June 13), Minnesota (June 26), Nebraska (July 17), Wisconsin (August 1), California (August 10), and Colorado (August 12). On March 25, 1915, a minimum-wage law went into effect in Arkansas, and on May 22, in Kansas.

The spread of the movement met a check when its constitutionality was questioned by F. C. Stettler, of Portland, Oregon, who on this ground brought suit in October, 1914, against the Industrial Welfare Commission to restrain the commission from carrying out the provisions of the act. Having lost his suit in the circuit court by a decision rendered in November, 1913, Stettler appealed to the state supreme court, but with no more success. On March 17, 1914, the court handed down a decision upholding the constitutionality of the law. Following this decision, Miss Elmira Simpson, an employee of Mr. Stettler, brought suit against the commission. She alleged that its rulings would deprive her of the right to work. Again the circuit and the state supreme courts upheld the law. Then both cases were appealed to the United States Su-

preme Court. The first argument was made in December, 1914, but before a decision had been rendered changes in the personnel of the court made necessary a re-argument, and it was not until April 9, 1917, that the decision was announced which upheld the constitutionality of the Oregon law.[1]

In the meantime, Massachusetts was the only state where the legislation already enacted was extended continuously. The Massachusetts law provides for the successive investigation of individual industries; and accordingly wage determinations have been made for some six industries, applying to workers in women's clothing factories, in the brush, corset, and candy trades, in laundries and in retail stores. But in some states having more drastic legislation than Massachusetts the wage laws remained for the most part inactive. In others they were deferred by legal processes. In Minnesota, all the awards of the Industrial Commission were held up by a court injunction. In Arkansas, the law was declared unconstitutional by a lower court, and the State Supreme Court, to which the case was appealed, decided to reserve judgment until the Federal Supreme Court should hand down its decision.[2]

All this uncertainty which checked the enforcement of the law arrested also the effort to extend it to other states. Investigating commissions had been at work in Connecticut, Indiana, Michigan, New York and Ohio, but their activity resulted only in recommendations that were not enacted into law.

The minimum-wage laws at present on the statute books are of three distinct types. There is the law embodying a

[1] Since this decision, minimum wage legislation has been enacted in Arizona and in the District of Columbia.

[2] Shortly after the decision of the United States Supreme Court, the Arkansas Supreme Court declared the state minimum-wage legislation constitutional.

specific minimum wage which has been definitely fixed by the legislature. This exists in two states, Utah and Arkansas.[1] In Utah the act simply states that

> it shall be unlawful for any regular employer of female workers in the State of Utah to pay any woman (female) less than the wage in this section specified, to wit: For minors, under the age of 18 years, not less than 75 cents per day; for adult learners and apprentices, not less than 90 cents per day . . . for adults who are experienced in the work they are employed to perform, not less than 1.25 per day.[2]

In Arkansas, the act specifies a wage of $1.25 a day for experienced adults in the employ of express and transportation companies and in manufacturing and mechanical pursuits, mercantile establishments and laundries. The law also provides a minimum-wage commission which has power to make any readjustments in this rate that may be necessary to make it conform to the requirements of the necessary cost of living or the maintenance of health and welfare.

There is a second type under which an administrative authority, the minimum-wage commission, fixes the minimum wage upon the recommendation of advisory wage boards made up of employers, employees and the public. The only power of enforcement lies in the right of the commission to publish the names of those employers paying less than the minimum rate. This type exists in only two states, Massachusetts and Nebraska.

In the third type, the minimum wage is determined also by a wage commission guided by an advisory wage board of employers, employees and the public, but the wage commission is given powers of enforcement, and a penalty of

[1] Arizona also has a statutory rate of wages of $10 a week for all females.

[2] *U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Bulletin no. 167*, p. 205.

fine or imprisonment, or both, is provided for the violation of the law. This type exists in six states — California, Colorado, Kansas, Oregon, Washington and Wisconsin.

The wage commission is appointed by the governor. It usually consists of three persons, one of whom is a woman, and generally represents the employer, employee and the public. Arkansas provides that the commission shall consist of the Commissioner of Labor and Statistics and two competent women. California and Washington each have a commission of five members. One of the commission in California must be a woman. The Washington commission consists of the Commissioner of Labor and four disinterested citizens. Nebraska has a commission of four members, consisting of the governor, Deputy Commissioner of Labor, a professor of political economy in the state university, and one other citizen of the state. One of these must be a woman. As a rule, the commissioners serve without salary. Their only pecuniary compensation is for expenses incurred during the discharge of their duties. In Arkansas, no compensation of any kind is specified. In California and Massachusetts, commissioners are paid $10 and their expenses for each day of actual service. These commissions may engage secretaries and other assistants. The right to engage a secretary is also given to Oregon and Washington commissions, where only expenses are allowed to the commissioners.

These commissions have broad powers of investigation into all occupations in which women and minors are employed. Their authority includes in all cases the determination of minimum wages, but it usually goes further and extends to hours and other conditions of labor affecting health and safety. Original inquiry depends in all cases upon their initiative. They may subpœna witnesses, administer oaths and examine books. Their rulings are subject to court re-

view, but merely on questions of law. Under certain circumstances their rulings may be set aside if the court holds that they are unlawful or unreasonable. This may also happen, as in Massachusetts and Nebraska, if compliance would prevent a "reasonable profit" or would endanger the prosperity of the business.[1]

In every state the law applies to women and girls, and in all except two, Utah and Arkansas, it applies to male minors. Every industry employing these classes of workers is included within its scope

The guiding principle in the determination of adequate earnings is the "living wage". In California, Kansas, Minnesota, Oregon, Washington and Wisconsin, this is the sole basis in fixing minimum rates of wages. The Industrial Welfare Commission of California has power to fix a wage to be paid to women and minors in any occupation, trade, or industry "which shall not be less than a wage adequate to supply to such women and minors the necessary cost of proper living and to maintain the health and welfare of such women and minors." The Minnesota Commission is authorized to determine the minimum wage sufficient for living wages for women and minors of ordinary ability." Oregon, Washington and Kansas make it unlawful to employ women in any occupation for wages

[1] According to the Massachusetts law "an employer who files a declaration under oath in the supreme judicial court or superior court to the effect that compliance with the recommendation of the commission would render it impossible for him to conduct his business at a reasonable profit shall be entitled to a review of said recommendation by the court under the rules of equity procedure. The burden of proving the averment of said declaration shall be upon the complainant. If after such review, the court shall find the averments of the declaration to be sustained, it may issue an order restraining the commission from publishing the name of the complainant as one who refuses to comply with the recommendations of the commission."—Act of 1912, Chapter 706.

inadequate to supply the "necessary cost of living and maintain them in health." Arkansas fixes a statutory rate of wages and charges the Minimum Wage Commission with making it conform to "the necessary cost of living" and the "maintenance of health and welfare." Wisconsin formulates the principle most explicitly. "The term 'living wage,'" says the Wisconsin act, "shall mean compensation for labor . . . sufficient to enable the employee receiving it to maintain herself under conditions consistent with her welfare," and "the term 'welfare' shall mean and include reasonable comfort, reasonable physical well-being, decency, and moral well-being." The same principle is embodied in the laws of Massachusetts, Nebraska, and Colorado. In these states, however, wage boards must take into account not only the needs of the employees but also "the financial condition of the occupation and the probable effect thereon of any increase in the minimum wage paid."

Most of the minimum-wage laws provide for exceptional classes of workers. In all the states but Arkansas and Utah exceptions to the minimum-wage rates are made for defectives. This is usually regulated by providing for a special license to women who are "physically defective or crippled by age or otherwise." Minnesota safeguards against the abuse of their rule by requiring that the number of such licensed persons shall not exceed one-tenth of the whole number of workers in any establishment. California requires that the license shall be renewed semi-annually. In most of the minimum-wage laws exceptions are also made for learners and apprentices. In Arkansas, a worker is deemed experienced after six months' employment. In Washington, the Industrial Welfare Commission fixes a time-limit for the special license issued to apprentices. In Wisconsin, it is required that minors be divided into two groups according to the character of the occupation in which they engage. If

employed in a "trade industry"—that is, an industry "involving physical labor and characterized by mechanical skill and training such as render a period of instruction reasonably necessary"—they are indentured for the period of their apprenticeship and special wage rates are fixed for them. Those not employed in trade industries receive special licenses to work for less than minimum rates while they are minors.

The power to enforce the law varies. With the exception of Massachusetts and Nebraska, the commissions may inflict penalties of fines or imprisonment, and in some instances both, for violations of their decrees. Fines range from $25 to $100 for each violation, and imprisonment may be from ten days to three months. Two states, Wisconsin and Minnesota, fix a minimum fine of $10. California, on the other hand, makes the minimum $50. Only four states—California, Colorado, Minnesota and Oregon—provide the possible additional penalty of imprisonment. California and Minnesota fix a maximum period of imprisonment at thirty days and sixty days, respectively. In Massachusetts and Nebraska the enforcement of the law practically depends upon the willingness of the employer to accept the decree of the wage commission. The procedure following a decision of the commission is the publication of a summary of its findings and of its recommendations in at least one newspaper in each county of the commonwealth. The commission is also required "at such times and in such manner as it shall deem advisable" to publish "the facts, as it may find them to be, as to the acceptance of its recommendations by the employers engaged in the industry to which any of its recommendations relate, and may publish the names of employers whom it finds to be following or refusing to follow such recommendations." But if the court set aside the ruling of the commission, as is provided when an employer

shows that compliance would make it impossible for him to conduct his business at a reasonable profit, the commission is then restrained from "publishing the name of the complainant as one who refuses to comply with the recommendations of the commission." Under these circumstances it is clear that when a wage ruling must take into consideration the "financial condition of the business," no effective enforcement of the law can be obtained if employers choose to oppose it.

In order to safeguard the employee who may give testimony in any investigation or proceeding relative to the enforcement of the law, minimum-wage laws usually make it a penal offense for an employer to discharge or to discriminate in any way against any employee because such employee has testified or is about to testify, or because the employer believes that the employee may testify in any such investigation or proceeding. The penalty is from $25 to $100 for each offense.

With the exception of Arkansas and Nebraska, state legislatures have made appropriations for the work of minimum wage commissions. In two states, Colorado and Wisconsin, the appropriation is included in the general fund for the Industrial Commission. In the others, with the exception of Massachusetts, a definite sum, from $3,000 to $15,000, is annually provided. In Massachusetts the sum provided varies from year to year.

American experiments with minimum-wage legislation have had the benefit of the experience of the Australasian States and Great Britain. New Zealand was the first to enact a law providing a means for fixing a legal minimum wage. It was embodied in the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1894, which was primarily a compulsory arbitration act for the prevention and settlement of strikes and lockouts. The machinery for the administration of the

law consists of industrial courts which have jurisdiction in their respective districts over all working conditions, including questions of wages. These courts have no power to start proceedings and they take no cognizance of industrial conditions until disputes arise and are referred to them. A different system was adopted by Victoria, which was the next to follow New Zealand's example of regulating wages. In 1896, Victoria enacted legislation providing for wages boards consisting of employers and employees in six specially sweated trades. Since then the system of wages boards has been gradually extended to practically all the industries in Victoria. Each trade or industry has its own board, and these boards take the initiative in determining wages and other conditions of employment within the industry. At the present time, all the Australian states and the Commonwealth itself have provided for minimum-wage legislation founded on a combination of wages boards and industrial courts—*i. e.*, a combination of the original system in New Zealand and Victoria. These pioneer states have modified their early legislation so that New Zealand now has virtually a system of wages boards added to the industrial courts, and Victoria has a court of industrial appeals which may review the determinations of wages boards.

The laws of the different states vary with respect to the definite establishment of a living wage as the guide in wage decisions. In a number of the states—Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia — the law specifies for the guidance of the court that it shall endeavor to secure a living wage to employees. The laws of South and Western Australia are most explicit in this respect. The latter state provides that "no minimum rate of wages or other remuneration shall be prescribed which is not sufficient to enable the average worker to whom it applies to live in reasonable comfort, having regard to any domestic

obligations to which such average worker would ordinarily be subject." [1] Where the law does not provide specifically that the wage must be a living wage, as in New Zealand or in the Federal law of Australia, "the living wage" is usually accepted as the basis in wage determinations and awards, and above that various rates are fixed for the several occupations coming under the jurisdiction of a board, according to skill." [2]

It is a noteworthy feature of all the Australian and New Zealand practise that wage rates throughout the industry are fixed for both skilled and unskilled labor. A second distinct feature is that wages are fixed for both men and women. With the exception of Western Australia, all the Australasian States have, in addition to the other wage regulations, statutory rates below which no worker may be employed. These laws are essentially child-labor laws. "A special reason for their enactment was to prevent the employment of children or apprentices without any wage or at a premium, as was often done under the pretense of teaching the trade." [3]

The first extension of minimum-wage legislation to countries outside the Australasian group was made in Great Britain in the Trade Boards Act of 1909. This act was modeled on the Victorian system of wages boards and applied, as did the original Victorian Act, to a few especially sweated trades. The trade boards, as they are called in England, are under the jurisdiction of the Board of Trade, which is in some respects similar to the industrial courts of New Zealand and Australia. For its legislative orders the Board of Trade is in turn responsible to Parliament, which must confirm, and may amend or repeal its provisional

[1] *U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, op. cit.*, p. 167.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

orders. Under the Act of 1909, the Board of Trade was empowered to appoint trade boards in the ready-made and wholesale bespoke tailoring, paper-box making, machine-made lace, and net finishing and mending or darning operations of lace-curtain finishing, and hammered and dollied or tommied chainmaking. In addition, the Board of Trade had the authority to make a provisional order applying the act to any other specified trade if they were satisfied that the rate of wages prevailing in any branch of the trade were exceptionally low, as compared with other employments, and that "the other circumstances of the trade" made it expedient to apply the act. In 1913 four additional trades were brought under the act and the Board of Trade has taken steps to extend it further.

The act is administered through trade boards consisting of an equal number of members representing employers and employees together with a smaller number of members who are not connected with the trade. These trade boards which have jurisdiction over the entire industry in Great Britain are aided by local committees, also representative of employers, employees and the public. The time or piece rates fixed by these groups may apply to the whole trade, or to any special process, or to any special class of workers or to any special area. No reference is made to the living wage as a basic principle in wage determination. The act is essentially an anti-sweating measure—a means of raising wages where they are "exceptionally low" as compared with other employments, and it applies to both men and women. When a minimum rate of wages has been made obligatory, a fine of not more than twenty pounds for each offense is the penalty for its violation.

Into French legislation, the principle of a minimum wage was introduced in 1913. A bill was passed providing for a compulsory minimum wage for women home workers in the

clothing industry, including hats, shoes, lingerie, embroideries, laces, plumes and artificial flowers. The act is administered by the local labor councilors, or, in their absence, by the local courts.

The law here, as in Great Britain, seems to be designed, not primarily to secure a living wage, but to protect the workers in conspicuously underpaid work. The minimum wage shall be fixed "in such a manner that it shall in no instance be less than two-thirds of the usual wage paid for the same occupation to female workers employed in shops;" or "in localities where home-work exists exclusively, the wage received by female day laborers or that of female workers employed at the same occupation in other comparable localities shall be taken as a basis." [1] This minimum wage serves as a basis for judgments by the industrial courts in wage disputes submitted to them. At least once in every three years it must be revised by the labor councilors. The law applies also to men if they perform at home the same work as female workers and receive a lower wage than the minimum determined for women. Under such circumstances they may request the labor councilors or the industrial courts to apply the same wages to them.

So much, then, have the various countries accomplished in minimum-wage legislation. This review of minimum wage legislation should make it clear that there is no one fixed way of setting rates of pay. The large degree of variation indicates that such legislation is still in the experimental stage, and it is too soon to say just what is the most effective machinery for its operation.

The greatest uniformity of wage laws lies in the emphasis upon the living wage as the minimum compensation an employer is permitted to pay. The only exceptions are in the English and French legislation where the primary pur-

[1] *U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, op. cit.*, p. 185.

pose is to raise the level of wages in exceptionally low-paid work; and in those commonwealths of the United States where, in fixing the wage, the financial condition of the business is taken into account. Historically, the tendency has been clearly in the direction of establishing a living wage in industry as the basic wage, as the absolute minimum below which rates must not fall. The more recent legislation in the United States specifies this distinctly, and the judicial interpretation of the law in Australia and in New Zealand has confirmed the principle until at present it is beyond dispute. Wage laws are also unified in that wage rates usually represent the outcome of discussion between employers, employees and the public. The consideration shown for these three factors in the wage question is a very conspicuous feature of minimum-wage legislation. Proper investigation of the prevailing rates of wages, careful examination of the respective claims of all parties interested, and safeguards against hasty or prejudiced action are universally secured.

Perhaps the most striking difference between minimum-wage legislation in the United States and in all other countries is in its scope. Everywhere except in the United States minimum-wage laws apply to men as well as to women. Resting as they do on the principle of establishing a living wage as the point in the wage scale below which rates may not fall, there is no logical reason for fixing it only for women. If the principle is sound for women's wages, it is also sound for men's. However this may be, in the United States the minimum-wage movement has been connected with the question of wages not primarily as a labor problem but as a sex problem.

CHAPTER V

The Argument for and against Minimum-Wage Legislation

Minimum-wage laws are the latest addition to a series of regulations that specify the conditions under which women and children may be employed in industrial work. In all but six of our American states, the number of hours that a woman may work either in any one day or week, or in both, is fixed by law. Some states prohibit the employment of women at night; some exclude them from certain processes or occupations; quite generally some sort of statutory provision is made for their comfort and health through various sanitary and safety measures. Now to these regulations affecting "the environmental conditions of labor" is added the regulation affecting the value of labor—"the center and heart of the labor contract."

The preamble of the Oregon minimum-wage law implicitly states the underlying object of this type of legislation as follows: "The welfare of the state of Oregon requires that women and minors should be protected from conditions of labor which have a pernicious effect on their health and morals, and inadequate wages . . . have such a pernicious effect." Some of the detailed evidence on this point has already been presented in discussing the relation of wages to the cost of living. The widespread existence of a constant deficit between weekly wages and the cost of living threatens the physical well-being of individual women, and through them the coming generation. Standards of

morality are undermined and the whole plane of life is lowered.

To guard, then, against the "pernicious effect" of low wages, certain states have fixed a minimum rate of pay based upon the necessary cost of living. They have thrown out to industry the challenge that it shall be conducted on a sound social basis. It must not exist at the expense of the vigor, health or morality of its employees. Nor must it leave its employees to rely upon assistance from incomes received in better-paid occupations. An industry that pays its workers less than a living wage is a positive detriment to the community against which the community protects itself by erecting a standard of wages for industry to observe as a condition of its survival.

Broadly speaking, the failure of industry to pay a living wage may be traced to a lack of bargaining power in the workers and to inefficient management on the part of the employers. Under the present system of wage payment the weakness of women's bargaining power may be inferred from the very nature of the work they do. For it is a field in which the supply of labor is always relatively abundant and most difficult to organize for collective action. Boys and girls just out of the elementary schools, immigrants with no industrial training, young women, and older ones too, forced to earn a living and with no preparation for it—all these fill the ranks of the unskilled worker. As far as the work is concerned, one worker is likely to be as competent as another; each may be considered as the rival of the other throughout the range of unskilled occupations. To the employer the most important question is "which will do it the more cheaply," and in the matter of individual bargaining his strategic position is generally admitted.

Moreover, as we have pointed out in a previous chapter, women workers are a constantly shifting group. Their

wage-earning years coincide, as a rule, with the later years of adolescence when social activities are of prime importance. In these the young girl's interest naturally centers. For through them she not only satisfies the universal instinct for recreation and amusement, but she also finds the opportunity for marriage that ends her wage-earning days, or at least is supposed to do so. What can be said of the bargaining power of the individual in such a group of young, inexperienced, untrained, shifting workers whose wage work is regarded by themselves and every one else as something to be done in the years between leaving school and getting married? How can it possibly match that of business men " whose livelihood consists to a great measure in bargaining and who obtain information as to the condition and prospects of industry in the ordinary course of their every-day occupation "? [1] Obviously under such circumstances the employer may practically dictate the wage rate. To the degree that competition for work is active among the employees, wages will tend to the level of the most necessitous or the most ignorant—to the level of those who for one reason or another will work most cheaply.

Minimum-wage legislation, thus, raises the plane of bargaining. It establishes a basic wage which must be paid to safeguard the welfare of the community and makes this a condition of employment. Any higher wage than this basic one may be a matter of bargaining, but at least a living wage becomes a charge upon industry. If an industry can maintain itself only by paying its workers less than a living wage, it is socially an unprofitable enterprise. Rightly it should be forced out of existence and an effort should be made to direct its labor into more remunerative fields. If its existence depends upon increasing prices to cover the increased cost of labor, consumers must pay more for the commodity

[1] Tawney, R. H., *Minimum Rates in the Chain-making Industry*, p. 30.

than they have paid before. If they are unwilling to do this, either because they can use a substitute or because for any other reason it is worth no more to them than they have been paying for it, such an industry will disappear.

As a matter of fact, experience with the fixing of wage rates in a given industry has shown that frequently one or more establishments already are paying minimum rates. Others are able to adjust their business to the new basis of labor cost. It is this fact that points to the prime importance of business organization and management as a factor in wage payment. As we have seen, establishments in the same industry working side by side in the same locality under the same competitive conditions pay widely different rates of wages. What is the explanation? The writer shares the belief that it is largely to be found in the factors of organization and management. The legal provision that wages shall not fall below a certain minimum forces attention to these factors as no other measure of social legislation has done. If all other things remained equal, "an increase of wages must necessarily lead to an increase in the cost of production." But they do not. Beneficial changes are made in the direction of efficiency. "The increased cost, threatening a diminution of profits, acts as a powerful stimulus with the owner or manager of a plant who is anxious to find means of reducing the increased cost, where he was satisfied before to plod along in the established rut." [1]

In the brush industry in Massachusetts, for example, the wage board found that in methods of remuneration there were "many things which are burdens both to employer and employee, and employers often make employees suffer overmuch from their own lack of management." [2]

[1] *State Factory Investigating Commission, New York, Fourth Report, Testimony of N. I. Stone*, p. 662.

[2] *Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission. Bulletin no. 3*, p. 24.

Piece rates [the Board stated], are, speaking generally, such rates in themselves and fixed in such a manner as to give the best returns neither to employers nor to employees, and where a large number of employees are on day pay the concern suffers even more than in piece rate work from lack of adequate production.[1]

It is hardly possible to deny that low wages are in part due to mistaken principles of wage payment, to ignorance of the relation between labor efficiency and wages, and to the absence of a modern system of cost accounting.

It is only recently that what may be called scientific consideration has been given to the question of the cost of production, the relation to it and to each other of the several factors of production. The outcome of such inquiries as have been made by the United States Tariff Board, the Federal Trade Commission, and by the independent investigations of efficiency engineers is bound to revolutionize industrial management and to establish new tenets for the practical business man. One theory that already is threatened seriously is that the cost of production is a definite sum fixed chiefly by the wages paid and the price of materials. As a matter of fact, the findings of the Tariff Board in the paper, woolen and cotton industries point to the absence of a single cost of production.

Costs varied in the same industry and in the same city, and also in the same plant. . . . In the paper and pulp industry it was found that the labor cost of making a ton of newsprint paper in the United States varied from $2.19 to $7.26 per ton. The most remarkable fact about it was that mills paying the lowest wages and having a twelve-hour day had a higher labor cost per ton of paper than those paying the highest rate of wages and having an eight-hour day.[2]

[1] *Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission. Bulletin no. 3*, pp. 24-25.

[2] *State Factory Investigating Commission, New York, Fourth Report*, p. 657 *et seq.*

The explanation is found in the difference between mills in the matter of equipment.

Some had machinery thirty years old, while others boasted of machines with latest improvements. The older machines had a capacity of 17 tons in 24 hours, while the newer machines could produce 50 tons. The result was that the machine cost of labor per ton of paper was $1.84 on the old machine and only 82 cents with the new, the same rate of wages being paid to the machine tenders in each case.[1]

Other findings on this point in the cotton and woolen industries are also worth quoting.

Figures obtained direct from the books of leading Japanese mills compared with similar data for corresponding mills in the United States led to the startling revelation that with the superior American machinery and superior personal efficiency of American labor the American weaver receiving $1.60 per day was cheaper than the Japanese weaver at 18.5 cents per day. A study of labor efficiency in the various processes of wool manufacture made by the Tariff Board showed that almost invariably the mills paying higher rates of wages per hour produced goods at a lower cost than their competitors paying lower wages. Thus in wool scouring the lowest average wages paid to machine operatives in thirty mills examined was found to be 12.15 cents per hour, and the highest 17.79. Yet the low-wage mill showed a labor cost of twenty-one cents per hundred pounds of wool, while the high-wage mill had a cost of only fifteen cents. One-half of the difference was accounted for by the fact that the low-wage mill paid nine cents per hundred pounds for supervisory labor, such as foremen, etc., while the high wage mill paid only six cents. Apparently well-paid labor needs less driving and supervising than low-paid labor.

In the carding department of seventeen worsted mills the

[1] *State Factory Investigating Commission, op. cit.*, p. 658.

mill paying its machine operatives an average of 13.18 cents per hour had a machine labor cost of four cents per hundred pounds, while the mill paying its operatives only 11.86 cents per hour had a cost of twenty-five cents per hundred pounds. This was due largely to the fact that the lower-cost, high wage mill had machinery enabling every operator to turn out more than 326 pounds per hour, while the high-cost, low-wage mill was turning out less than forty-eight pounds per hour.

The same tendency was observed in the carding departments of twenty-six woolen mills. The mill with the highest machine output per man per hour, namely 57.7 pounds, had a machinery labor cost of twenty-three cents per hundred pounds, while the mill with a machine output of only six pounds per operative per hour had a cost of $1.64 per hundred pounds. Yet this mill with a cost seven times higher than the other, paid its operatives only 9.86 cents per hour, as against 13.09 cents paid by its more successful competitor.

[These examples show] that mill efficiency depends more on a liberal use of the most improved machinery than of low wages. Thoughtful planning in arranging machinery to save unnecessary steps to the employees, careful buying of raw material, the efficient organization and utilization of the labor force in the mill, systematic watching of the thousands of details, each affecting the cost of manufacture, will reduce costs to an astonishing degree.[1]

If the general contention is sound that high wages are accompanied by a lower cost of production, any movement looking to the increase of wages has this *a priori* argument in its favor. Moreover, if, as can be shown, an ascending scale of wages marks the general improvement in the industrial organization and business management between different countries and different times in the same country, minimum-wage legislation would seem to force business practice along the same line of progress as have other changes, such as trade-

[1] *State Factory Investigating Commission, op. cit.*, pp. 660-661.

union demands or the requirements of other forms of legal regulation. For the necessity of paying increased wages will prompt, to an unprecedented extent, a challenge of established business methods. It will forcibly urge employers to conserve their profits by compensating advantages in some form of greater efficiency in production. In this respect, as Mr. Webb has pointed out, the history of trade-unionism furnishes instructive experience. The fixing of a minimum wage is a familiar feature of trade-union policy. The enforcement of this policy has led to the adoption of one improvement after another in mechanical processes. This has happened so frequently over such a long period of time that we may safely conclude the enforcement of a definite minimum rate of pay "positively stimulates the invention and adoption of new processes of manufacture." When employers can no longer "nibble at wages, they are driven in their competitive struggle with each other to seek advantage in other ways." Productivity is thus at least maintained and usually it is enlarged. Furthermore, the practice of establishing minimum rates in putting a premium upon efficient management tends to drive out of business the inferior establishments which exist in every trade. To this extent the productivity of industry is also increased.

Also it is reasonable to suppose that wage laws will stimulate productivity by a more careful selection of the employee.

If the conditions of employment are unregulated, it will frequently "pay" an employer (though it does not pay the community for him to do so) *not to select the best workmen* . . . . the employer may (in the absence of definitely fixed minimum conditions) make more profit though less product, out of inefficient workmen than out of good workmen.

It may be added that an employer may also make more profit, and the same or more product, out of more efficient workers. The closer attention to quality of labor forced by wage legislation promises to make for greater productivity in so far as it makes for the selection of the fittest for employment. This influence is already seen at work in the discharge of those not considered worth the minimum wage.

In yet another way minimum-wage legislation promises to increase productivity. There is reason to believe that the worker who is paid enough to secure physical efficiency will be for that very reason a better producer. Workers who are living on the plane of a subnormal standard do not have the same physical spirit and energy as those who can provide for at least the minimum requirements of reasonable living.

There is nothing which makes for inefficiency like hunger, worry, and discontent. As a rule, you can be sure that the underpaid girl is hungry, that she is the victim of nearly continual worry, that she is overworked because she is trying to do her own cooking and washing as well as her work in the shop, and that she is not getting the food and the care to keep her in condition to do good work, even if her mental attitude could be such as to inspire it. No man can say how many of the girls now said to be inefficient and "not worth" the miserable wages paid would not be worth a higher wage if they were paid it. . . . If this sort of service were paid for under conditions which make for efficiency, it is very likely that the service would become efficient in proportion.[1]

Minimum-wage legislation, therefore, establishes a wage which should be a basic wage. It does not *fix* wages except in the sense that it determines the lowest point in the wage scale. Confident that industry can bear it, wage legislation

[1] *Annals, American Academy Political and Social Science*, vol. xlviii, p. 18.

puts the responsibility for paying a living wage upon private enterprise, and says, in brief, to the employer, "This is the condition on which you will be permitted to conduct your business." It rests upon the same general principles that underly all labor laws, *viz.*, that they are necessary to equalize the bargaining power of employer and employee and are vitally connected with the public welfare.

The opposition to minimum-wage legislation centers in its disputed value as a means of increasing wages. There is no challenge of the wage facts. There is no evidence to refute the alleged discrepancy between earnings and the cost of maintaining a normal standard of living. There is no denial that when wages fall below a living standard it is a matter of serious concern that calls for remedy. But, say its opponents, to provide the remedy by direct legislative action violates the fundamental principles that determine wages, and, while producing greater evils than it aimed to cure, stands in the way of measures more beneficial and effective.

Again and again employers have contended before investigating commissions that wages are fixed by the natural law of supply and demand, which no legislation can abrogate.[1] The fundamental factor that determines the rate of wages is the same that determines the price of any commodity, *viz.*, the relation of effective demand to available supply. Low wages indicate an abundance of labor relative to the demand; high wages indicate a relative scarcity of labor. To say, then, that employers shall not pay less than a given wage is to deny the application of that principle of evaluation that runs throughout the price-making process. A sounder plan and one in conformity with "natural law" would seek to raise wages by reducing the numbers available

[1] *State Factory Investigating Commission, New York, Fourth Report,* vol. i, pp. 456, 796.

for the low-paid occupations. A restriction of immigration, for example, would work for this end. The development of social insurance would also operate in the same direction by protecting the families of wage-earners against the loss of earning power of the male members due to sickness, accident or unemployment. An improved system of public education would have a similar effect; provided emphasis were put upon vocational training, and provided also that a fairly generous policy were followed of giving aid to students through scholarships. "In short," as one opponent puts it, "the way to raise the minimum wage and all other wages is not by an enforced subsidy in aid of wages, but by those longer and more difficult methods which shall make the desired result inevitable. We must learn to cultivate powers and not deal in ready-made results—not to tie on the flowers but to water the plant." [1]

The argument savors of *laissez-faire* and an optimistic reliance upon natural law which can be trusted to bring all things right in the long run. It differs radically from the principle underlying wage legislation and all other factory legislation, the obligation of the state to control economic processes as conducted by private enterprise so as to safeguard the weaker party to the wage contract and to protect the general welfare. It is, in short, a belated challenge of the principles of liberalism.

More specific opposition has developed to wage legislation in the labor world on the ground that it would weaken or retard the trade-union movement, which is held to be a sounder method of raising wages. Trade-unionists themselves are divided on this point. And although such official organizations as the American Federation of Labor and the National Women's Trade Union League have endorsed the measure, it is to be noted that the A. F. of L. approves of

[1] Joseph Lee in *Survey*, Nov. 8, 1913.

it not as a principle of wages for all labor, but only for that of women. To its application to men they are strongly opposed. A small minority among both men and women trade-unionists oppose it even for women. For, they hold, the same reasons that underlie the opposition to this measure for men are valid also when women are considered. "If," they say, "women need state protection on the ground that they do not organize as men do, then also the mass of unskilled, unorganized men who do not appreciate the advantage of organization need it. The reasons for trade-unionists to oppose the state interference in wage rates apply to women workers as they do to men." [1] These reasons may be noted briefly. To begin with, it is believed that the organizations imposed upon unorganized workers as a result of the wage-board system which requires representation from workers, will lack, by the very condition of being imposed, virility and force. Says one writer:

> when a demand is made for a wage inquiry for the purpose of an award in an unorganized industry, it does not come from the workers, that is, not from their collective willing, but from those interested in the operation of the law as a measure of social improvement. . . . Everyone who has had a kindergarten experience in the organization of workers can testify that a superimposed organization never becomes an actuality, with character of its own; the force of a labor union is the collective will of its members, and no concession of value is granted to a makeshift organization from which that will power is absent. Of more importance to labor than an award granted under such circumstances, is the fact that a nominal organization backed by employers or friends of the law, and carrying the endorsement of the state will effectually stifle free organization or even protest.[2]

[1] *State Factory Investigating Commission, New York, Fourth Report,* vol. i, p. 774.

[2] Helen Marot in *Unpopular Review,* October, 1915, pp. 397-411.

To those who see the ultimate solution of industrial problems in the voluntary and self-initiated organization of the wage-earners, such unions as would be required by wage board would be but a mockery. They would supply a state substitute for the spontaneous organization of labor and would result eventually in a subservience to state control.

Besides obstructing the extension of the regular trade-union movement to the unorganized trades, the action of the workers' organizations that are created by wage boards would tend to undermine the strength of the unions in the trades already organized. For, since the findings of the wage boards are based upon the necessary cost of living, and since subsistence is practically the same for the unskilled and the skilled worker, the rates fixed by the wage boards will tend to fix the cost for all workers. "When a wages board determines a minimum for the workers in one trade, based upon the cost of living, it determines minima for the workers of the industries of the locality. If the cost of living approximates $8 a week for umbrella workers of New York City, so it does for the cigar makers, the glove workers, and the milliners." [1] In so far as there is no driving force behind the wage-board unions, wages will not rise above the minimum rate, and the final result will be a general lowering of wage standards for all workers to the necessary cost of living.

On the other hand, equally competent authorities in the trade-union movement maintain that far from retarding the progress of organization, wage legislation will actually further it. And, as has been said, the majority of women trade-unionists support the measure. Into this matter we shall go further in our later detailed discussion of trade-unionism.

Finally, the opposition to the minimum-wage movement

[1] Helen Marot, *op. cit.*

rests upon the opinion that it would entail results more serious than the evils it is designed to cure. That it would lead to unemployment and higher prices; that the minimum wage would become the maximum; that industry could not bear the strain, *etc.* Of these, perhaps the most emphasized is unemployment. That a certain increase in unemployment may take place is frequently conceded by even the advocates of wage laws. But, they maintain, in so far as it is due solely to the fact that an employer does not think a girl "worth" the higher rate of pay, it will serve to separate the inefficient from the efficient, and special arrangements can be made for dealing with them as a class of labor. The inefficient will no longer be competing with the efficient for jobs and tending to lower the level of all workers in their group. But after all, say the opponents, low wages are better than no wages. They scornfully refer to the "joker in the law" by which the worker is ostensibly benefited but actually injured. "State wage minima," they say, "are actually in line with methods of modern industrial development, which is economy of labor power, or, in the language of factory economics, unemployment." It is claimed that the result of such legislation will be the

> elimination of the lowest grades of workers by supplanting labor power with machine power, by exacting a larger output per worker, by speeding up, or by increased efficiency in management, or, where the law applies to some workers and not to men, by the substitution through immigration of foreign male labor—these are capital's very simple and familiar methods of eluding increased wage rates. Furthermore, the labor saving devices that would inevitably follow state wage minima would require increased capitalization in the trades affected. Increased capitalization means business consolidation, and business consolidation is in itself a labor-saving device which swells the labor market.[1]

[1] Helen Marot, *op. cit.*

Cogent comment on the forecast of unemployment as a result of the minimum wage has been made by Mr. R. H. Tawney in the case of the tailoring trade in England and is well worth quoting here.[1]

The establishment of minimum rates of payment may undoubtedly involve an interference with the vested interests of such workers as are unable to earn them, which is more or less serious according to whether that class is large or small, and according to the level at which the rates themselves are fixed. But in this respect the policy of the minimum wage does not differ from any other kind of social intervention, or indeed from the ordinary changes of economic life which arise from the normal conduct of industry. From the point of view of the person who loses employment, it is irrelevant whether the cause of his displacement is action on the part of the state, for example a factory act, or action on the part of his employer, for example the reorganization of a business. The effect on the individual concerned is certainly not more mischievious in the former case than in the latter. Whenever an employee discovers a new process, whenever a change in fashion causes the production of one class of good rather than another, whenever Parliment raises the age of compulsory school attendance or passes new factory legislation, whenever a Poor Law Authority decides to substitute a "strict" for a "lax" system of relief, there is an interference with vested interests from which small or large classes of wage-earners suffer, often, without any such compensation in the shape of an advance in the lowest earnings as has been brought about by the Trade Board. . . . The dislocation caused by the first application to an industry of a minimum wage is, in fact, a particular case of a general and much more extensive problem, and must be judged not in isolation but in reference to it. Any argument against the Tailoring Trade Board based merely on the fact that it had made more precarious

[1] Tawney, R. H., *Minimum rates in the Tailoring Trade*, pp. 164-166.

the livelihood of the older and slower workers would be at least equally valid against the introduction of power driven sewing machines, or, indeed, against the erection of factories themselves.

The question of industrial displacement in the case of wage rates as in every other case must be judged " not by the immediate dislocation which it causes, but by its general results upon social welfare."

In so far as the opposition rests upon forecasts of the bad results of wage legislation, it is evident that nothing but the test of its actual working will settle their validity. We shall consider further this phase of the opposition in the following chapter, which sets forth the movement in the light of concrete experience.

Apart from the alleged evils that it involves, the controversy between the advocates and opponents resolves itself into a conflict of social philosophy. The latter revert to the working of natural law and the principle of competition; the former would extend the principles of state control to raise the plane of competition and to restrict its working in the interest of the common good.

CHAPTER VI

The Effects of Minimum-Wage Legislation

Nothing short of actual experience of the social and economic effects of minimum-wage legislation can settle the controversy between its advocates and opponents. If it is practicable and fundamentally sound, a fair trial will reveal that fact; if it is impracticable and unsound, a fair trial will reveal that fact also. Without a convincing demonstration of their futility, belief in the promise held out by minimum-wage laws as a remedy for low wages is so strong that it cannot be shaken. Although it is probable that final judgment will depend upon the results of experiments made in the United States, the experience of Australasia, and especially of Great Britain, has been such a powerful stimulus to the minimum-wage movement in this country that it is worth while to consider briefly how much reliable guidance there is for us in the actual working of the system where it has been longer in operation.

The most representative of the several laws in force in Australasia are those of Victoria, New Zealand and New South Wales. Of these three, Victoria furnishes the most illuminating data for America. Our legislation has its prototype in the Victorian Minimum Wages Board. The Victorian legislation is concerned primarily with protecting society from the evils of low wages, whereas the law in all other states of the Australian Commonwealth and in New Zealand is designed chiefly to maintain and promote industrial peace by eliminating strikes and lockouts. An exam-

ination of the working of the former, therefore, will furnish some idea of the effects of wage awards in their most clear-cut form without the complications that arise when we try to separate them from the other effects of a general system of compulsory arbitration and conciliation for industrial disputes.

At the outset, it may be noted that when the bill providing for wage boards was introduced into the Victorian Parliament it met with violent opposition. Most of the arguments advanced against it have figured in the campaign in this country which we have noted in the preceding chapter—the interference with liberty of the subject; the abrogation of the law of supply and demand; the predictions that it would drive work out of the country, that only the best workers would be employed, that it would be impossible to enforce its provisions, and so on. Enacted and applied in the face of this hostility, what does its operation show after twenty years' experience? [1]

One result seems to be established beyond dispute, *viz.*, the abolition of sweating among both home and factory workers.[2] This was the evil that the wage-board system was first designed to remedy. The reports of the Chief Inspector of Factories show that it has been possible to raise the level of wages so that complaints are no longer heard of miserable rates of pay. Five years after the law went into effect the Chief Inspector of Factories reported that "many of the notorious 'sweaters' have settled down to fair prices. A few who at one time gave out work now

[1] The best summary of the results of wage legislation in Australasia is given in the study made for the New York State Factory Investigating Commission by Paul S. Collier. Upon this I have drawn largely in the present chapter.

[2] Collier, "Wage Legislation in Australasia," *State Factory Investigating Commission, New York, Fourth Report*, vol. iv, p. 1878.

make it up themselves instead of sub-letting it, while others have disappeared entirely from the trade. Complaints re sweating rates are conspicuous by their absence." [1]

Granting that legislation has eliminated the excessively low wages in the sweated industries, what has been its effect upon wages in the other more normal trades to which it has been extended? Here the answer is not so clear-cut. On the basis of figures for 1900 and 1912, a direct increase in wages has been common both in trades where boards have fixed rates and in those where they have not. For men the average increase has been greater in the board than in the non-board trades. When Mr. Aves compared the average wage of men in 1900-1906, he found that "on the whole there was a considerable advance in the board, but only a trifling increase in the non-board rates." [2] Mr. Collier observes the same tendency in his later wage comparisons, but with much less difference between the two groups. For women, on the other hand, he found that the average increase had been somewhat greater in the non-board than in the board trades. The conflicting tendencies in the movement of men's and women's wages need more explanation than can be gained from the data furnished.

The chief criticism of the data on wages is their incompleteness. A wide difference is shown between wage changes in both board and non-board groups, suggesting the importance of individual industrial studies, if we are to get much light upon the forces that have operated to produce such varying results. Such wage comparisons as can be made on the basis of available statistics are too general for definite conclusions. The relation, if any, of the wage determinations to the general rise in wages is nowhere clearly

[1] Collier, *op. cit.*, p. 1879.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 1895.

indicated. It is undeniable that there has been a great advance of earnings in the board trades, but, as we have seen, there has been an even greater advance in the non-board trades. Is it possible to trace the specific influence of a single factor like legislation in times of a general rise or fall in wages? Probably not. It has been, no doubt, a factor, but only one of many in the industrial development of Victoria since 1897. With some fluctuations, the commercial life of the state has shown a record of prosperity. "Through all its shifting history," says Mr. Collier, "one fact stands out clearly, the wages boards are not held responsible for the periods of trade depression nor for the times of business prosperity. Their sphere has constantly been extended in season and out of season." [1] This is probably as much as can be said on the basis of our present information. Though it admittedly leaves unsettled the question of the exact influence of wage legislation on wages, at least it can be said that it has been a potent factor in getting rid of miserably low rates of pay and in establishing a fair standard wage in industry.

Has the minimum wage become the maximum also? The Reports of the Chief Inspector of Factories refer frequently to this point. In the Report for 1901, the Chief Inspector states:

> The Special Board system has now been in force in a few trades since 1897, and I have no hesitation in saying that the minimum wage is never the maximum wage. If we take the clothing trade, for instance, the minimum wage for adult males is 45s. per week, whereas the average wage paid last year was 53s. 3d. per week; for adult females in this trade the minimum wage is 20s. per week, whereas the average wage paid last year was 22s. 3d. per week.[2]

[1] Collier, *op. cit.*, p. 1927.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 1897.

In a similar way, the figures quoted for the boot, shirt, and furniture trades show a tendency for the average wage to rise above the minimum. In later reports the point is often reiterated. The succeeding table prepared by the Chief Inspector of Factories in 1914 is the most recent evidence on this point, and includes all of the trades where a direct comparison was possible.[2] A glance at it will show that in every instance the average wage paid is in excess of the rate fixed by the wages board.

A Comparison of the Average Minimum Wage Paid in Certain Trades with the Statutory Minimum Wage as Fixed by the Wages Board Determination for the Particular Trade

Board.	Year ending 31st December, 1910.		Year ending 31st December, 1912.	
	Wages board rate.	Average wage paid.	Wages board rate.	Average wage paid.
Bread carters.	40/	40/10	48/	48/8
Boot	54/	55/8	54/	56/11
Dressmakers	16/	21/9	21/6	26/5
Furniture (bedding).				
Males.	50/	52/4	57/	61/10
Females.	25/	26/4	27/6	28/3
Furniture (cabinet making).				
Females.	25/	27/2	27/6	29/9
Jam trade	.....	.....	48/	48/8
Livery stable.	.....	.... .	42/	44/8
Milliners.	22/6	31/5	22/6	32/4
Organ.	58/	64/8	58/	61/5
Process engravers.	.....	.....	62/	83/6
Underclothing	20/	27/1	20/	23/9

Nevertheless, some evidence to the contrary exists in the reports themselves. In ironmoulding, for example, the Report of 1906, made by the Chief Inspector of Factories

[1] Collier, *op. cit.*, p. 1899.

in Victoria, pointed to a tendency to pay unskilled workers the bare legal rates. The minimum rates for ovenmakers are seldom raised. In the making of aerated waters, wages have steadily declined toward a dead-level fixed by the standard wage. The same tendency has been apparent in the cardboard-box industry and in order dressmaking. Exceptional as such cases may be, they are sufficiently numerous to qualify the different findings in other industries. Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that the method followed in these reports is the crudest and perhaps the most unsatisfactory way of indicating that the minimum does not become the maximum. A few very well-paid workers would serve to raise the average above the wage-board rate. What we need to know is *how many* are getting *more* or *less* than the minimum rate before and after its establishment, and *how much more* or *less* they are getting. Moreover, comparison should be made with industries in which there have been increases in wages but which are free from the rulings of wage boards. In these trades is the variation from the lowest wage paid greater, the same, or less? Much more and better statistical evidence is needed on this point before any conclusion can be drawn. Again, this evidence should be furnished with a background of trade conditions, including especially the state of the labor market for each occupation and the condition of business. The suggestion of the influence of these factors in the Chief Inspector's Reports is only enough to make us wish for more. For example, data on the brick-making industry show that in 1905 when business was dull there were few instances where wages were higher than the board states. The following year, when business had improved, one factory paid all of its hands more than the legal minimum. And by 1908, with continued prosperity, "there was a general consensus of opinion that the rates paid were not

limited by determination standards." [1] Such evidence supports the contention of minimum-wage advocates that a legal minimum only furnishes a plane below which wages may not fall. The degree to which they rise above the plane will depend on other and different influences.

Another item that Mr. Collier points out must be considered carefully.

It would seem [he says], that the rate fixed for any given trade has a large part to do in making that a minimum or a standard rate. If the rate fixed is not too high and the demand for labor is normal, higher wages are bound to be paid to the more skilled hands, and even to the workers of the lowest grade. But it must be admitted as Mr. Murphy (Chief Factor Inspector) has pointed out, that in Australia generally the action of the wages boards and the arbitration courts has been to unduly inflate the pay of unskilled as compared to skilled workers.[2]

Regarding this point, Mr. Murphy said in a personal letter to Mr. Collier, March, 1914:

This of course will have a number of evil effects, and to my mind is the greatest defect that can be pointed out against the wages board system as we know it in Victoria. It takes away the inducement of the energetic young worker to increase his efficiency. As this factor increases in importance, it will probably have the effect of further equalizing the pay of workers in any trade.[3]

Enough has been said to indicate that it is highly desirable—in fact, it is indispensable—that the movement of the wage scale shall be examined in connection with individual industrial conditions and with methods of rate-making.

[1] Collier, *op. cit.*, p. 1898.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 1900.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 1901.

Until more definite statistics are compiled by competent authorities, the opponents of wage legislation will continue to heed those Australian employers who make the statement, unsubstantiated by facts, that the minimum tends to become the maximum. On the other hand, its advocates who deny the statement have not much more of a factual basis to fortify their position than the bare suggestion of a tendency. On the whole question of the influence of the wage legislation on the wage scale, great caution must be used in interpreting results.

Let us turn to another aspect of wage legislation, its effect upon employment. What has the Victorian experience to show for the oft-repeated assertion that such laws would tend to throw employees out of work, or to substitute one class of workers for another? Here, as in the case of wages, the evidence is conflicting. Some trades show an actual reduction in the number of workers coinciding with the new wage determination, some show an actual increase, some show no change whatever. In the boot and shoe trade, one of the first to which the wage-board system was applied, scores of workers were thrown out of employment. This was due in part to other special influences. A period of general commercial depression had caused the usual slack demand for labor; improvements in machinery in the manufacture of boots and shoes had caused the supply of labor in this trade notably to exceed the demand. Part of it, however, was due to the legislation itself. The wages boards at that time made no provision for the old, infirm, or slow worker, and in consequence they were dismissed in somewhat wholesale fashion. Eventually, however,

> the trade recovered its balance and the labor market was readjusted. The fact that the number of adult males employed in the trade increased from 1897 in 1900 to 2,861 in 1912, and the number of females from 600 to 1,571 during the same years

is conclusive evidence that the trade was not permanently injured by the enactment of a higher wage standard.[1]

In the dressmaking trade, another of the initial board trades, and a trade in which a large proportion of the employees are women, both the number of adult females and the total number of females in the trade actually increased during the year of the wage determination.[2]

As the wage-board system has been extended from trade to trade, the fear of a discharge of workers usually has preceded its adoption. But subsequent events have only partially confirmed its reasonableness. Mr. Collier shows that

of a list of seventeen trades coming under a determination from 1903 to 1910 and having a continuous history from 1900 to 1912, nine showed a decrease in the number of adult male workers while there was an increase in eight. In a similar group of six trades employing females, three show a decrease, two an increase, while one remained practically stationary. Another group of twenty-seven trades employing males in which determinations took effect during 1901 and 1902 shows a decrease for fifteen, an increase for ten and a stationary condition for two.[3]

The later history of these trades brings out the fact of prime importance that

in only three instances was a decreased number of employees during the determination year associated with a permanent decline in the number of workers occupied in the trade, and in only six did a stationary condition remain. The great majority of industries have flourished and employed a larger

[1] Collier, *op. cit.*, p. 1904.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 1905.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 1905-1906.

number of hands with each succeeding year, once the period of readjustment is past.[1]

Here it may be well to state that where work has been reduced, "the cry of distress has come from the less competent members of the community. . . . Complaints are not made in behalf of able and efficient employees, but for the old, the weak, and the infirm." [1] It is admitted that only a period of prosperity has kept this group at work, and that the real test of distress and unemployment will come at a time of commercial depression.

On the whole, it would seem that the relation of wage legislation both to employment and to other phases of industry is essentially one of adjustment. That there will be different results in different trades is to be expected in view of the varying cost, and the varying intelligence and efficiency of the managerial group. Satisfactory information on the manner in which employers have made the adjustment is extremely meager. There is reason to suppose that in some instances the adoption of the wage-board system has been a direct stimulus to better business practice. Labor-saving machinery, new inventions, improved methods of work—these would appear to have been more quickly introduced under the influence of higher rates of wages. A certain tendency has been noted on the part of some employers to displace adult workers by those younger and less skilled. In other trades the contrary policy has been followed of substituting the more efficient for the less efficient worker. The displacement of men by women, which is another phase of this question, can neither be proved nor disproved by the evidence at hand. Still another phase of adjustment is overspeeding labor to compensate for the

[1] Collier, *op. cit.*, pp. 1909-1910.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 1912.

higher wage. In the early years of the wage-board system there were many complaints by time-workers of "speeding up." But in 1908 Mr. Aves reported that even those who might have been tempted to resort to this practice were unable to do so because the shortage of labor had put workers in a position to challenge such a policy.[1] This condition has been a large factor in the industrial world for the last ten or fifteen years.

The testimony of employers is as vague as the testimony of data. Many employers believe that no appreciable effect can be traced directly to the special boards. Others think they may have strengthened what was the normal tendency of the time toward greater specialization and the expansion of manufacturing processes. Many claim that laborers are less efficient than in former years. The Chief Inspector of Factories, on the other hand, stated in 1913: "I think it can be truthfully said that the efficiency of the workers all round is distinctly higher under the minimum wage than it was before." [2] In short, no statistics are available to settle what specific influence wage legislation has had either upon general business organization and method or upon individual efficiency.

Nor is it any less difficult to settle the question of the relation of higher wage rates to the cost of production and prices. In reply to a special inquiry made by Mr. Aves on this point, twenty-eight employees and employers said they were unable to mention a case where higher prices were the result of wage determinations. Nine were either doubtful or contrary in their opinion. Mr. Collier states that

[1] Aves, *Report to the Secretary of State for the Home Department on the Wages Boards and Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Acts of Australia and New Zealand*, p. 52. Quoted by Collier, *op. cit.*, p. 1916.

[2] *State Factory Investigating Commission, New York, Third Report*, p. 54.

in several trades where wages have increased, neither cost nor price has been similarly affected, and in some cases they have tended in opposite directions. Prices have in some trades been raised because of determinations, the cost of production thereby being passed on to the consumer. This has been true more especially of purely local industries in which machinery was little used, such as dressmaking. In the case of staple products labor legislation has had little effect on prices. . . . Under the latter circumstances the extra charge of higher wages must be met by increased efficiency of the productive organization or by a reduction in the proportion of profits.[1]

Mr. Collier believes that "both tendencies have been operative to some extent." But again, it must be repeated, conclusive statistical evidence is lacking.

The question of competition between regulated and unregulated districts is one that has had to be faced in Victoria and is of special interest to us in our present policy of the regulation of industry by the separate states. When the wage boards were first introduced in Victoria their jurisdiction was limited not only to special trades, but to cities, towns and boroughs. This meant competition between the town and country manufacturer in the same industry. There was also the competition of neighboring states. Although wage-determination rates were frequently paid voluntarily in country towns, complaints often were made against this principle of discrimination in the early days of wage legislation. It is only as the authority of wage boards has been extended to the shires, and as the practice of regulating wages has been adopted in the other states of the Commonwealth and in the Commonwealth itself, that complaints of unfair external competition have become very infrequent.

[1] Collier, *op. cit.*, p. 1919.

The fear that wage legislation will hinder or undermine the development of collective action among the workers has been noted in the previous chapter as common among trade-unionists in America. This fear the Victorian experience does not seem to justify. Mr. Aves, it is true, in 1908, expressed the opinion that the ultimate effect of minimum-wage legislation would be to weaken the voluntary collective action of the workers, in that one of the chief motives for the organization of labor would be fundamentally weakened. But, as Mr. Collier points out, there has been a material growth in unionism since 1908. In reply to a questionnaire sent out by Mr. Collier in 1914, fourteen employers believed the unions had been strengthened by the wage-board system. Eight thought otherwise. It is probably true, as he says, that "unionism in Victoria has not made such rapid progress as in some of the other states of Australia. A system of industrial arbitration dependent upon trade unions for its administration undoubtedly stimulates organization as no system of wages boards can do." [1] But at any rate the trade unions play an important role under the wage-board system in the appointment of members to wage boards and in the general enforcement of the act. There has been a "material growth in unionism since 1908 and there is no evidence to show that the wages boards have tended to destroy it." [2]

In summarizing the effects of wage legislation in Victoria, it may be said that neither the fears of its opponents nor the claims of its advocates can be tested on a trustworthy basis of fact. Conflicting evidence or complete lack of evidence mark almost every point in the controversy. This probably is due in part to faulty methods of investigation,

[1] Collier, *op. cit.*, p. 1945.

[2] *Ibid.*

but it doubtless is due more largely to the inherent difficulty of disentangling the influence of one specific factor in a highly complex set of circumstances. Moreover, in the very nature of things, wage legislation is bound to show contrary effects upon different establishments in the same industry and in different industries. Some concerns will be little affected by it, others will require less or more reorganization. In all probability, difficulties encountered by employers in making the adjustment and failure itself will be ascribed to the restricted legislation rather than to personal incompetency. The result is a conflict of opinion inconclusive as far as the merits of the question itself are concerned.

Perhaps the best evidence on behalf of the system of regulating wages in Victoria is the steady extension of the wage boards, the changed attitude of representative organizations of business men, and the attitude of employees themselves. Beginning with only six trades in which wages were exceptionally low, the wage-board system has been extended until at the present time it applies to one hundred and forty-one trades affecting about one hundred and fifty thousand employees engaged in a wide variety of work. In the early days of the movement the Victorian Chamber of Manufactures led the attacks upon the new system. In 1912 the president and secretary of this organization and the officers of the Victorian Employers' Association stated that their members no longer wished to see the system abolished. Neither do employees. To quote Professor Hammond, one of the most competent students of the Victorian system: "Whatever may be the difference of opinion between employers and employees as to the effect of the legal minimum wage in producing certain results, and whatever criticism they may make of the Factories Act, both sides are now practically unanimous in saying that they have no

desire to return to the old system of unrestricted competition in the purchase of labor." [1]

It was largely under the stimulus of belief in the success of the Victorian system that Great Britain in 1909 provided a similar remedy for certain notoriously low-paid industries. At the present time there are available the reports made by R. H. Tawney on the working of the system in chain-making and tailoring, and by M. E. Bulkley in box-making. All of these contain much instructive information on the effects of wage regulation on different types of industrial enterprise, but for our present purpose we shall consider in detail only the tailoring trade — a trade which offers the most difficult problems of the three types, and also a trade which in many respects is comparable with the same industry in America. As with us, it is one of the leading industries from the standpoint of the numbers of men and women it employs, and from the standpoint of the value of its product. According to the population census of 1911, nearly 280,000 persons were employed, of whom a little less than one-half were women. The value of the output was in 1907 about $125,000,000. Not only similar in importance is it, but in its general features also. The outlines of the industry and the general conditions under which it is carried on will in many ways seem familiar to the reader who knows anything of the organization of the men's ready-made clothing trade in this country. Of the organization of the trade, Mr. Tawney says: "There is probably no industry in which the methods of production have been standardized less than they have been in the manufacture of clothing." [2] Clothing is made "under the most widely

[1] *Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. xlviii, p. 35.

[2] Tawney, *Minimum Rates in the Tailoring Industry* (London, 1915), p. 10.

different conditions by the most diverse types of workers, and with the aid of the most various systems of organization." [1] At one end of the industry are

> the large factories equipped with every variety of power-driven machinery, relying mainly on female labor, and employing workers whose labor is so minutely graded that one woman may spend her whole time making the thirtieth part of a garment. At the other end is the living room of the isolated outworker, who takes out materials either direct from the factory or from a middleman and works upon them at home. Intermediate between these two extremes are the workshops, employing from five to forty workers, and dependent for orders either upon the factories or upon the retail shops, equipped with sewing machines but having little other machinery and no power and managed by a small master who usually works side by side with his employees.[2]

There is also a broad geographical division of the trade, "the north of England being the principal center of the tailoring which is carried on in factories and London being the center of the tailoring that is carried on in workshops." [3] There are, however, numerous workshops in Leeds, the most important city for the trade in the north, and numerous factories in London. Homework is found irregularly in the industry. In some important cities of the trade it does not exist; in others it is carried on only on a small scale; yet in others the number of home-workers is extremely large. Thus for all these reasons, as Mr. Tawney points out, "the tailoring trade is so widely extended, so intricate, and carried on under such a variety of different conditions, that the establishment of minimum rates of pay-

[1] Tawney, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 11.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

ment by the tailoring trade board may be regarded almost as an *experimentum crucis*." [1] What has been the result?

First as to wages. Owing to the lack of exact and complete data on wages, and owing also to the complicating influence of factors other than the action of the Trade Board, the findings on wages are to be taken not as a perfect measurement of the influence of the Board but only as an indication of what has been its tendency. Stating them in their barest form, it may be said that about one-third of the women received increased pay and about one-fourth of the men. But when certain qualifications are made, it is apparent that a much larger proportion must have received higher wages after the Board's determination. For it must be noted that differences in the level of wages in different parts of the country limited the application of the Board's findings. When the Board was appointed, there was a distinct difference in wage rates between the north and south of England. In the latter localities women's labor was relatively dear; in the former it was relatively cheap. The minimum fixed by the Board did not affect the vast majority of workers in the districts where the higher rates of pay prevailed. Thus the proportion of workers affected undoubtedly would be much larger if we had the data to consider only the districts where wages had been lowest, and which were the only ones perceptibly affected by the change in rates. But the exact measurement of this change cannot be had. It is evident only that a substantial proportion of the lowest-paid men and women have had their earnings increased.

Apart from the actual increase in wages, two other rulings of the Trade Board have had an important favorable bearing upon the worker's income. One provided that the rates must be paid " free and clear of all deductions." The

[1] Tawney, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

inroad upon earnings made by fines has been a serious grievance among many of the workers. This ruling secures them against a reduction below the minimum fixed by the Board. The second secures the worker against the loss previously incurred in waiting for work. This was a grievance frequently expressed by women workers.

'A very common practise, before the Trade Board's determination was issued, was for the workers in one department to be kept waiting without work, because it had not passed through the previous departments, with the result that they were neither earning wages nor free to return home and engage in any other work, such as domestic duties, which might be waiting for them there.[1]

For this situation the Board established the rule that in reckoning the earnings of a piece worker with respect to the minimum rates, the whole time spent in the workroom or elsewhere on the premises by the employer's instructions should be deemed the period of employment to be paid for. This change meant higher weekly earnings at once, for such a rule forced employers to take greater pains to provide continuous work. Furthermore, it resulted in increased leisure. The same amount of work is produced in a shorter time, and hence in many firms a reduction in working hours has been made which has meant chiefly the elimination of wasted time.

Concerning the tendency of the minimum to become the maximum, it does not appear that this has happened on any considerable scale during the two years in which the act has been in operation. A few firms, it is true, reduced their piece prices. This came about by reason of the closer examination of all prices forced by the Board's decision on minimum rates. Certain prices which had been apparently

[1] Tawney, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

abnormally high were cut down. In a few instances firms were found reducing the wages of better-paid workers to recoup themselves for the advances to the more poorly paid. But such cases are exceptional. What usually has happened has been that piece rates have been raised and the relation of the earnings of different classes of workers to each other have been left unaltered. "After, as before, the Trade Board's determination, one finds workers who are paid the same piece rate for the same work, and whose earnings, nevertheless, vary as much as 50, 75, or even 100 per cent." [1]

It is, of course, not among piece-workers but among time-workers that there is the greatest likelihood of the minimum becoming the maximum. It is interesting to find on this point comment similar to that on the Victorian experience. While the earnings of older workers have not been reduced, younger men and women receive the minimum at a fairly early age. This is better pay than they formerly received at that age, but there is a feeling that the rate of pay received by those who have just finished their learnership is about the same as for the older workers. The tendency would be to equalize wages for all ages. However, the act has not been in operation sufficiently long to test the assertion that those younger workers who are now receiving the minimum will not get more as they grow older. As the present writer points out in a later chapter, the higher earnings that are connected with experience and maturity may have to be obtained through the organized effort of older workers.

It is Mr. Tawney's opinion that contrary to reducing wages,

> the effect of fixing a standard which all workers must attain

[1] Tawney, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

is to give an impulse to a movement for an advance in wages throughout the trade. The workers who were previously getting above the minimum argue that, if before the issue of the Trade Board's determination they were worth (say) 2s. a week more than those who have now received an advance, they are worth it after the advance to the latter has been given, and therefore hold out for better terms.[1]

An employer residing in a district which had previously been notorious for the low wages of male workers, is quoted as saying: "The men who are getting more than the minimum are dissatisfied. This sort of legislation only tends to create unrest. The workers have been pandered to, and now they are asking for more." [2] Testimony from an opposite source is to the same effect. A trade-union secretary in the same locality declared: " There is more unrest than before, because now the men feel that something can be done. The less skilled men feel that the Union has done a good deal for them and should have their support. At the same time the better-paid people are dissatisfied because they think that their wages ought to be raised in proportion." [3]

To those who have feared that the legal regulation of wages would decrease the voluntary activities of the workers in their own behalf, the results of Mr. Tawney's inquiry on this point should be most reassuring.

So far from prejudicing Trade Unionism [he says], Trade Boards are likely, if we may judge from the short experience of the industries in which they exist, to encourage it, partly because they give both employers and workers an incentive for organisation, partly because the discussions and meetings which

[1] Tawney, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

they involve tend to create the corporate consciousness of professional interests on which effective Trade Unionism depends, partly because the main obstacle to Trade Unionism in the past has been the low earnings of certain groups of workers, partly because the Trade Board gives hope to workers who were previously hopeless. The psychological influence of the Trade Board system is, indeed, the most important of its results. Workers who were till recently convinced that agitation for higher wages was always futile and often dangerous have at last seen the advance for which they dared not ask brought about by law, and, now that the incredible has happened, have realized that there is no insuperable barrier in the way of better conditions. In the clothing industries, at any rate, the Trade Board has been followed by more thorough organisation both among employers and among workers. . . . It (the Trade Board) has been accompanied by the growth of Trade Unionism among hitherto unorganised workers, and by an increase in Trade Union activity. Thus the Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses reports an increase in membership which is stated to be largely due to the fact that the increase in wages has for the first time made it possible for women to join it in considerable numbers. . . . What has happened has been that the Trade Board, by raising the rates of payment among the worst-paid section of workers, has at once created a foundation upon which organisation can take place, and made it easier for the better-paid workers to obtain an advance by protecting them against the competition of the low-wage districts.[1]

In London a beginning has been made with the organization of home-workers. Whether these gains that have been, if not due to the determination of wage boards, at least coincident with them, will disappear under the influence of an alternating period of depression in the trade, remains to be seen.

[1] Tawney, *op. cit.*, p. 91 *et seq.*

In the effect of wage legislation upon employment, Mr. Tawney found little to justify the fears of those who predict that it will aggravate the already serious problem of the unemployed. This is due in part to the provision made exempting subnormal workers from the application of the minimum rates. By the agreement between the Trade Board and the manufacturers, a firm was considered to be complying with the rulings if 80 per cent of its workers were earning the minimum rate. This device provided primarily for slow and inefficient workers, since those suffering from special physical incapacity or infirmity had been especially exempted in the act itself. Such a provision obviously would check the tendency to remove those who were not considered worth the minimum rate.

A certain amount of displacement of adult workers appears to have been the result of the general overhauling of business management that followed upon the enforcement of minimum rates of pay. Many employers decided to "weed out" their less efficient workers. The resulting unemployment, however, was temporary. For when a group of manufacturers was doing the same thing it was not easy to discover other workers to take the place of the inferior ones who had been dismissed. In the meantime business continued active, and thus, not infrequently, workers were dismissed from one establishment only to be quickly employed by another at the minimum rates or more. The generally prosperous condition of business acted as a check upon the tendency to substitute the more efficient for the less efficient adult worker. In this connection it is significant that investigators were told repeatedly by firms "that in one way or another, sometimes by better training, sometimes by better machinery, usually by more careful organization, they had succeeded in bringing up to the

minimum workers whom they had previously stated to be incapable of earning it." [1]

It cannot be repeated too often that the efficiency of a worker is largely a question of business management. The worth of labor is partly a personal quality of the laborer, but it is a personal quality of the employer also. It is a question of the equipment provided to work with and the way in which the work is organized by the employer. These factors may make all the difference between high and low weekly wages.

What the experience of the Trade Boards suggests is that the efficiency or inefficiency of management is not constant throughout an industry . . . but that it is closely connected with the level of wages, and that, while good management makes it possible to pay higher wages, a rise in the wages tends to be accompanied by more efficient management.[2]

In the tailoring trade

the effect of the Trade Board on management has been seen in four main directions. It has been responsible for a closer supervision of earnings and of work. It has led to a more careful attention being given to the training of workers. It has caused processes to be subdivided and grouped differently. It has stimulated the introduction of new kinds of power and better machinery.[3]

The result has been that the increased cost of labor has been offset by superior methods of management, thus constituting a gain for the employee and no loss to the employer. It must not be inferred, however, that every employer has been able to make the reorganization successfully. Some have lacked the necessary intelligence; others have lacked

[1] Tawney, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 136.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 138.

the necessary capital. The group that felt the advance in wages most severely consisted of "the less progressive factory occupiers and small masters, who working neither with the careful organization of the former nor with the intense and highly skilled male labor of the latter, have held their footing in the industry mainly by employing the worst-paid women workers to produce the cheapest class of goods." [1] Some employers of this type have been driven out of business and others remain only on a precarious tenure. But as far as the trade is concerned, all that has happened is that their orders have passed to their competitors, who for one reason or another manage to pay better wages.

There appears to be little indication that employers have attempted to shift the higher-wage cost to the consumer by raising prices directly. Such rise in price as there has been seems to be part of the general increase in the price of clothing that began before wage boards had been introduced in the trade. It is possible, however, that some manufacturers may have used inferior materials and thus indirectly raised prices by lowering quality. But from the data available we cannot isolate the influence of Trade Board rulings in any definite and clear-cut way. The most that can be done in the question of the relation of wage rulings to price is to examine the trade for the presence of conditions inherently likely to emphasize their effect. We have seen already that the years before the Trade Board was appointed were years of rising prices, so at least the impulse to this price movement did not come with wage regulation. Moreover, in the second place, the probability of increased prices being due to cost of labor is connected closely with the importance of labor cost in production. The proportion which wages forms of the total cost of production varies with the grade of clothing. In the more

[1] Tawney, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

expensive suits the labor element is relatively more important. Fairly extensive inquiry brought out the fact that wages form from one-quarter to one-third of the total cost of production. This would mean that an increase, say of ten per cent, in wages would mean an increase in the cost of production of from two and a half per cent to something over three per cent. Under these circumstances, it is obvious that even if we granted no increase in the efficiency of individual worker or of business organization, the rise in wages to the level of the minimum rates would make only a small addition to the total cost of production. We must remember also that it is only in certain districts that the increased wage bill has been seriously felt. Some localities have been affected scarcely at all. And since manufacturers of all these districts are competitors in the same market, "it is very doubtful whether those manufacturers whose wages bills have been increased can place the extra cost on to the consumer, when their competitors are selling (as far as the Trade Board is concerned) at the same prices as before." [1]

One of the most significant facts that the investigation of the tailoring trade brought out is that wages are frequently low not because the industry cannot afford higher rates, but because certain employers take advantage of special labor situations. These are the lack of other opportunities offered for the employment of women and the character of the other employment followed by men. The presence of competing industrial employments for women, as in Leeds or Manchester, forces higher the wages of women in all trades; the uncertainty of the earnings of men workers among the clock laborers and other casual employments in East London, for example, increases the economic pressure upon the women of the group and depresses their wages to the level

[1] Tawney, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

of what the most helpless will take. Establishing minimum rates of pay has tended to even the local variations in the level of wages by depriving certain employers of an advantage they have had in being able to maintain their position by cheap labor. It has established a new level of efficiency for employers measured by the ability to pay a minimum wage to employees.

On the whole, the experience with wage legislation both in Victoria and in Great Britain has been to encourage those who advocated it as a remedy for low wages and their attendant evils. To its opponents in this country, however, it fails to carry conviction. First, because *conclusions* based upon its working in England are still somewhat tentative, and its opponents are not as much impressed by its *tendencies* as are its advocates. Secondly, the difference in the conditions under which the principle of wage legislation has been tried in Victoria—the application to men as well as to women, the homogeneous population of the country, the different industrial conditions—all these vitiate its value as an object lesson for America. As one critic says, "if we knew all about the ultimate effect of the same or other systems in foreign countries, we still would have to meet the incontestable proposition that *to insure the same general results* from any remedy, *it must be the same remedy applied under the same general conditions.*" [1] Whatever limits are placed upon the value of foreign experience, at least it must be admitted that within its own sphere it has justified the hopes of its advocates without confirming the fears of its opponents. Conflicting evidence is to be expected. That certain employers who suffer from it will be inclined to generalize their individual plight into an industrial crisis is perhaps not unnatural. That some industries will feel its

[1] *The Minimum Wage by Law.* Issued by Minimum Wage Committee, National Civic Federation (New York, 1916), p. 43.

influence more than others has been pointed out as natural and inevitable. But one cannot ignore the fact that no substantial body of facts refutes the results of those who defend the general benefits of wage legislation, nor can one be blind to the great fact that the principle has been steadily extended where it has been longest in operation.

Since American experience will influence most the minimum-wage movement in this country, however, it is well that we already have made a beginning on the inquiry. The effects of minimum-wage determinations on the brush industry in Massachusetts, on retail stores in Massachusetts and Oregon, and on a wide variety of occupations in the State of Washington, are now available for our examination. What guidance do they offer for the minimum-wage movement?

Scarcely a year after the wage decree went into effect in the brush industry, the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission undertook a re-inspection of the brush factories to ascertain the effect of the rates upon the industry.[1] A comparison of weekly rates of pay in 1913, the year before the wage ruling was made, and in 1915, eleven months after it went into effect, shows, as regards *rates of pay*, marked changes in the wage scale. For example, in 1913 forty-six per cent of the women workers were offered less than six dollars a week, whereas in 1915 only a tenth were paid at this rate. In 1913 three-fourths of the group were paid at a rate of less than seven dollars and nearly nine-tenths at a rate of less than eight dollars; in 1915 only seventeen per cent worked at a lower rate than seven dollars, and only twenty-one per cent worked at a lower rate than eight dollars. The most notable change in any single wage class came in the group rated between eight and nine

[1] *Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission, Bulletin no. 7* (Boston, 1915), p. 6.

dollars a week. In 1913 it contained only five per cent of the total number of women. In 1915 it contained sixty-eight per cent. This was due, of course, to the fact that the minimum rate, fifteen and a half cents an hour for a fifty-four-hour week, would make the minimum weekly rate fall into this group. But at the same time it is important to note that the proportion rated at over nine dollars a week doubled from 5.6 per cent in 1913 to 11.3 per cent in 1915.

Although employers largely had complied with the decree of the Minimum Wage Commission in offering higher *rates* of pay, the pay-rolls showed that employees in large numbers continued to earn less than a living wage.[1] Actual weekly earnings were recorded for 521 workers in the second week in June of 1913, and for 485 in the corresponding week of 1915. In June, 1915, over two-thirds (68.5) actually received less than eight dollars a week; nearly two-fifths received under seven and nearly one-fifth under six. Large as this proportion is, it shows an improvement, however, over the situation in 1913. Then over four-fifths (84.2) made less than eight dollars, over three-fourths (75.4) less than seven, and three-fifths (61.4) less than six. But the fact remains that even after establishing a minimum rate of pay, earnings continued to be inadequate for a very large proportion of those employed. The tendency to establish earnings on a higher level is seen most clearly in the changes effected in the wage groups "$4 and under 5," "$5 and under 6," and "$6 and under 7." The decreases in the proportions earning these several amounts are striking and point to a distinct leveling-up of wages. On the other hand, the proportion earning above the minimum rates increased from ten per cent (10.2) to nearly twenty (19.4). This would indicate that there has

[1] *Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission, op. cit.*, p. 8.

been no leveling-down of earnings toward the minimum—in other words, there does not appear to be a tendency for the minimum to become the maximum.

The Commission found, further, that the wage increases had been made with no untoward effect upon employment in the industry as a whole. In the sixteen firms from whom information was obtained, the total number of women employed had increased from 332 to 334; the total number of minors employed had increased from 36 to 51; and the total number of men employed decreased from 472 to 417.[1] These figures are important as far as the sum total of employment is concerned, but they do not reflect the changes that may have taken place within the labor group employed.

The data throw no light on the question of the possible substitution of less efficient for the more efficient workers, nor upon the contrary tendency of weeding-out the inefficient. They do not refer in any way to the influence upon the relative numbers of learners and apprentices in the labor group. They do not indicate whether employment has been maintained perhaps by the expansion of certain establishments and the reduction of the force in others; nor is any substantial information given upon the effect of wage rates upon management, although it is suggested that readjustments have been made in individual cases.

In addition to employment, the Commission selected the value of the output as a second index of business conditions operating promptly in showing changes in an industry. From data furnished by the State Statistics of Manufacture, the Commission shows that from 1913 to 1914 the number of brush-making establishments increased from twenty-seven to thirty, the capital invested from $2,771,038 to $3,286,997, the value of stock and materials used from $2,059,146

[1] *Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission, op. cit.*, p. 11.

to $2,232,684 and the value of product from $3,740,615 to $3,914,029.[1] These figures are offered as their own commentary on the growth of the industry in the period following the acceptance of the wage decree. The Commission found that compliance with the law was general, almost complete. This was true even with one very large firm that claimed to have discharged many of its low-paid employees on account of the wage ruling. This firm also alleged that "the minimum-wage requirements had been of great detriment to its business, causing it to refuse large orders."[2] Some manufacturers stated that "no effects whatsoever had been felt from the operation of the minimum-wage law."[3] Others thought "minimum-wage requirements were only a secondary condition, that of first importance being the prison competition."[4]

In concluding its report, the Commission stated that no employer had taken advantage of that provision of the law that would enable him to secure a judicial review of the Commission's wage decree on the ground that conformance to the rates would prevent his doing business at a reasonable profit. "The decree," it reported, "has been complied with in practically every instance. The increases in wages have been large throughout the industry, and at the same time the capital invested in the industry and the value of the product have materially increased. The employment of women and minors has not given way to the employment of men, nor has the minimum become the maximum."[5]

[1] *Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission, op. cit.*, p. 11.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

A Report by the Executive Committee of the Merchants and Manufacturers of Massachusetts, about a year after that of the Commission, sharply challenges it.[1] The claims of the Commission for the successful and peaceful operation of the law are answered by a petition which had been filed recently with the Commission, by seven leading brush manufacturers asking for "the immediate quashing of the decree in the brush industry," [2] and by extracts from letters received from brush manufacturers. A statement is appended to the report from one of the oldest and largest firms showing a decrease of one hundred and eighty-five in the number of women and minor workers employed in corresponding weeks of September, 1913 and 1915, with a consequent loss of earnings of $853.76. According to this firm, the effect of the decree had been practically to stop the manufacture of the lowest-priced and many medium-priced brushes, the kinds most largely used, and to drive the trade to other states. Moreover, not a dollar's worth of the large export army and navy orders for England and France had been manufactured in Massachusetts. These orders had gone instead to competitors in other states—a direct result of a minimum-wage law that had increased wages from 25 per cent to 40 per cent in Massachusetts over the rates paid in other states in an industry that is severely competitive. Actual unemployment and a retarded development of the industry, the Executive Committee directly charged to the working of the law.

The Minimum Wage Commission had assumed that an increased value of stock and materials and of the finished product was evidence that the industry had prospered even

[1] *The Minimum Wage: A Failing Experiment.* Published by the Executive Committee of Merchants and Manufacturers of Massachusetts (Boston, 1916).

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

though forced to pay higher wages. In reply to this statement, the Executive Committee pointed out that it had been due chiefly to the increased cost of the bristles, which form "a very large percentage of the entire cost of manufacture and of stock materials." [1] The war cut off the European supply, and the purchase of bristles had to be made in the Orient and elsewhere at an average advance of between 30 and 40 per cent in price. In the opinion of the Committee, "the bristle situation amply accounts for every dollar of this increase, and more." The increase in invested capital is naturally explained by the advent of three new brush-making establishments. These new factories were accounted for by a large bristle importer as due to

> the increased home market for brushes since the outbreak of the European war, which has necessitated the furnishing of an abnormal quantity of brushes for home use by the manufacturers of the United States, to take the place of the enormous quantity manufactured in Europe and exported to the United States prior to the war's outbreak.[2]

Judging the working of the law on a basis of these reports one finds in the statements of the employers' representatives ample evidence to qualify the complacency with which the Commission regards the act, but there are so many unanswered questions, so many gaps in the argument of each that it would require a fresh examination of the industry to establish any definite conclusions on even the tendencies of the law. It is not without significance, however, that in spite of the sweeping condemnation of the most substantial manufacturer referred to above, the same firm states that "if the law is to continue it should be tried out in a manner to demonstrate it practically, by applying it to several of the larger manufacturing industries." [3]

[1] *The Minimum Wage, op. cit.*, p. 26.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

The writer would also add the suggestion that the actual working of the law be tested not by the Commission which becomes a judge in its own case, nor by manufacturers whose opinions and conclusions are too open to the charge of prejudice, but by a state authority, or preferably the Federal Government with official access to factory records, *etc.* Such an investigation must be carried out on much broader lines than those hitherto laid down, if we are to secure results of substantial value.

A more detailed examination of the effect of wage legislation is that made by the authority of the United States Department of Labor in Oregon.[1] The study was confined to retail stores—the only industry in which at that time there had been a thoroughgoing application of minimum rates to a fairly large number of women employees. It was begun in the fall of 1914, a year after wage rulings had been made for store employees in Portland and nearly nine months after they had been made for store employees outside of Portland. Retail stores in Portland and Salem furnish the data of the investigation.

It may be well to state at the outset that reservations, which were recognized frankly by the investigators themselves, must be made on the findings of the investigation. As in other similar studies, the results show only *tendencies*. "The numbers of women affected in the State of Oregon were too small and the time for the adjustments both for the business interests concerned and the state authorities was too short" to warrant conclusive statements. The writer of the report wisely points out that,

> regardless of minimum-wage determinations, there are constant changes in business organization from year to year which have a material bearing upon the opportunities and conditions

[1] *U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Bulletin 176.*

of employment. New departments are added from time to time, successful departments are expanded, and other departments which have failed to secure the public recognition expected are curtailed and sometimes eliminated. All such rearrangements involve additions to transfers, or reductions in the labor force. These adjustments are of common occurrence.[1]

In view of these facts it is necessary that the effect of minimum-wage legislation be watched closely for a period of time that shall include various fluctuations in business conditions, and a careful effort must be made to distinguish effects due to its working from those due to other influences.

Subject to this general qualification, what can be said of the results of wage legislation in Oregon? The point probably least open to dispute on the ground of specific influence is that of wage *rates*. Following the Commission's wage determinations, it became unlawful to employ any woman or girl in Oregon at a rate of less than $6 a week. Furthermore, no woman eighteen years of age or over with one year's experience in a store occupation can be employed for less than $9.25 a week in Portland or for less than $8.25 per week in other parts of the state in the same occupation. The investigators obtained from the pay-rolls the prevailing rates of pay for all classes of women and for the special groups created by the application of the law.[2] On the basis of these data, certain conclusions regarding wage *rates* may be drawn. (1) Any rate lower than $6 a week had been practically abolished by compliance with the Commission's ruling. The group profiting the most by this change was naturally that made up of girls under eighteen years of age.

[1] *U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, op. cit.*, p. 7.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 18-22.

Prior to the wage determinations, twenty-six per cent of the girls in this group were rated at less than six dollars a week. After the determinations, only one was found in the Portland stores and another in the Salem stores who was entered on the pay-rolls at less than the minimum rate. The average rate of pay for these girls increased thirty-one cents per week. (2) For all classes of employees the per cent receiving $6 a week had increased slightly. The changes in this group were most marked for those under eighteen years of age and for the inexperienced adults. They seem to have been brought about in the first group without any lowering of the wages of those who had been receiving more than six dollars a week. The proportion in this wage class increased in Portland from 55.80 per cent to 79.38 per cent, while the proportion earning over $6 remained constant. The same was true in the Salem stores. As the report states,

> the fact that 20 per cent were still receiving more than $6, although in a group for which the awards stipulated only that they should be paid not less than six dollars, shows that employers did not reduce wages of minors to the minimum permitted by the wage determinations, but continued to pay wages as before on the basis of the value of the services rendered.[1]

The change was effected in a somewhat different way for inexperienced adult women. Before the new wage rates were made, nearly fifty-nine per cent of these women received more than six dollars a week; afterwards only fifty per cent. The increase in the number receiving six dollars seems, thus, to have been made up not only of those who were before receiving less than that amount, as in the case of minors, but includes also some who had before received more than that sum. It should be noted that the proportion

[1] *U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, op. cit.*, p. 20.

of this group receiving more than nine dollars and twenty-five cents increased. But the general trend in the rates is downward. (3) The proportion receiving the minimum rate increased from 8.5 per cent to 23.2 per cent in Portland, and from 8.4 to 22.4 per cent in Salem. This change was, of course, due chiefly to the increase of rates for experienced adult women. The numbers in this group paid at that rate increased from 12 per cent to nearly 30 per cent. This was accomplished with no reduction, but rather a slight increase, in the proportion receiving over the minimum rates. (4) It is undoubtedly true that the rates of pay of women as a whole have been increased. Regardless of age and experience, they now begin their wage-earning career in stores at not less than six dollars a week. This has been of unqualified value to minors, but apparently some inexperienced adults receive less than before the wage determinations were made.

A comparison at this point of actual earnings, before and after the wage determinations were made, will be a surer index to the benefit accruing from higher wage rates. As the writers of the report point out, the amount of money a woman actually receives is more important than her rate of pay. The investigators, therefore, assembled data on the average weekly earnings and hours of labor before and after the minimum-wage determinations.[1] These data show that for all classes of workers there was an increase of 8.8 per cent in actual earnings after the wage determinations. The rates of pay increased during the same period 4.1 per cent, and this came about with less than a quarter of an hour more of service per week. Some interesting differences are seen in the different age and experience groups. For minors, although there had been a five-per-cent increase in their rate of pay, there followed only a three-per-cent in-

[1] *U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, op. cit.*, p. 24.

crease in their earnings. At the same time their working week was about three per cent shorter. Inexperienced adults, however, showed an increase of nearly seven per cent in their earnings, which is in striking contrast to the six-tenths of one per cent decrease in rates of pay. This probably is explained largely by the six-per-cent increase in the number of work hours. The third class, made up of experienced adults, show an increase in actual earnings of four per cent as compared with a two-per-cent increase in rates for a working week shorter by two and one-half per cent. Thus it would seem that minors were the group most benefited by the wage legislation.

It is also worthy of note that, as we already have pointed out in the brush industry, a large proportion of women continued to earn less than the rates provided to meet frugal but decent conditions of living. Only a little more than one-third of experienced adult women actually received their full rate of $9.25 or $8.25 throughout the two months included in the period of the investigation.

The influence of the wage determinations upon employment is to be found in certain readjustments within the industry rather than in actual unemployment, which frequently is alleged to follow from the attempt to fix wages. The fact that there was an actual decrease in the numbers of women and girls employed before and after the minimum-wage determinations is to be accounted for by certain changes such as might be expected in a normal business year and by the general depression of 1910-1914 which shows itself in a marked reduction in sales. The establishment of new departments, the elimination of old departments, the adoption of a policy of charging for the alteration of garments—such changes as these have a direct influence upon the grade of labor employed. "The decrease in total numbers bears little or no relation necessarily to the

minimum-wage determinations, but the dismissal of particular women rather than others because they had completed their apprenticeship period and must therefore be paid a higher wage if retained, can be considered as due to the determinations." [1] In the opinion of the investigators, the tendency to increase the number of girls under eighteen can be traced directly to the wage determinations. As their report points out,

> there are certain occupations which department-store managers contend, require little skill or experience and do not warrant a wage of $9.25 per week. . . . The work, it is said, can be done by minors as satisfactorily as by adults. A number of adult women who were experienced in these errand-girl occupations when the minimum-wage determinations took effect, were transferred to other occupations to begin an apprenticeship anew; others who were not suited to or for whom there was no opening in more skilled occupations such as selling, sewing, or clerical work, were dismissed. Formerly no attention was given to the particular age of the women entering these positions. A girl of sixteen entering now as a bundle wrapper can continue in the occupation for two years before she is entitled to the minimum wage for experienced women; another girl entering at eighteen years or more must receive the minimum in one year, and therefore becomes a problem for her employer a year sooner than her younger sister. Naturally the minors are given the preference in these relatively unskilled occupations. In the skilled occupations minors have decreased.[2]

A tendency also seems to have been at work to dismiss girls at the completion of their apprenticeship. This would naturally follow in the case of women not capable of doing more than the simplest kind of work. Such incapacity may

[1] *U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, op. cit.*, p. 8.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

be due in many cases to a retarded mental development occurring in otherwise normal people. The law which provides for the exemption from its application of the physically defective alone, makes no provision for cases of this type. It has not been customary in the past for women to work their way from one occupation to another. Usually they have had experience in but one occupation. Hence it has happened that the requirements of the wage decrees have forced employers to dismiss the girls when they have passed beyond the stage of apprenticeship during which they may work for less than minimum rates of pay.

The report gives no indication of the attitude of employers on the working of the law. But it points to a very wide opinion among store women that the minimum wage had wrought only harm to themselves as a whole.

The experienced women contended that formerly they had gotten through the day without any hurry or strain. If it was necessary to work a few minutes overtime, they did so willingly. Now, they said, they are under constant pressure from their supervisors to work harder; they are told the sales of their departments must increase to make up for the extra amount the firm must pay in wages. With business declining, this was hardly a possibility. The result was that the women were very worried and the worry was intensified in November 1914—the month they were visited—because of the fear that large numbers would be dismissed after the Christmas rush was over and the dull days of January confronted the employers.[1]

As the report goes on to state,

these women did not ask themselves to what extent the same conditions would have prevailed in a poor business year had there been no wage regulation. They knew there were wage

[1] *U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, op. cit.*, p. 68.

and hour regulations and that some women had been benefited, but if they had not personally benefited and had only experienced the pressure from above and the fear from the future, their anxiety found vent in heated denunciation of the minimum wage as the visible cause of their jeopardy. As expressed by one assistant department head: "It's mighty fine for the young girls beginning now, but for us, who have worked our way up from the bottom to near the top, to have to see that the wherewithal is made to pay the younger girls a living wage, is making us pay a heavy price for the benefit of the next generation." [1]

It is hardly necessary to point out that this reaction to the law on the part of *experienced* women is just what was to be expected. As we have seen, it was indeed the younger workers who were most benefited by the minimum rates. Many adults had no change in their rates. Some experienced adults suffered an actual decrease in earnings. A few experienced women returning to the shops after a period of absence were compelled to accept the legal rate even when it was less than the one at which they had been employed previously. But there is no evidence to show that it was due chiefly to minimum-wage legislation that greater pressure to work harder was brought to bear on those who were exempt from its application. On the contrary, there is reason to believe that the women to whom the rates did not apply were in the departments devoted to the more expensive goods where a business depression makes itself most felt.

This opinion is confirmed substantially by an analysis of the selling efficiency of the groups of women affected by the minimum wage before and after the wage determination and of those not affected by it. The only measurement of efficiency obtainable was the amount of sales of the sales-

[1] *U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, op. cit.*, p. 68.

women, which is admittedly not a complete nor always a perfectly fair basis upon which to judge. But, to repeat, it was the only measure obtained. Data were collected from three stores in which there were a sufficient number of saleswomen in comparable groups before and after the minimum-wage determination.[1] The first noticeable point is that the average sales per day of work in the three stores had decreased 6.2 per cent after the determinations. But the average sales of the women affected by the minimum wage had decreased only nine-tenths of one per cent whereas the sales of women in the same stores who had been receiving more than the minimum, and were not affected by the wage determinations, decreased 13.3 per cent. Moreover, the selling efficiency shows a progressive decline the higher the wages paid. Experienced adult women receiving over $15 a week had the largest per cent (12.9) of decrease in average daily sales. At the other end of the scale the inexperienced minors and adult women show an actual increase of 6.8 per cent in average daily sales. Probably the most important factor in producing these results is the customary employment of minors in departments least affected by a depression in business—departments such as the notion and handkerchief departments. The data would seem to suggest that the complaint of the experienced that they were working harder to pay the increased wages of others than themselves is without foundation.

There is also evidence that the new wage rates did not increase labor cost to such a degree as in itself to incline employers to bring extra pressure to bear upon all their employees to make up for it. Estimating labor cost on the basis of the per cent which average weekly wage payments were of average weekly sales before and after minimum-wage determinations, the average weekly wage payments to

[1] *U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, op. cit.*, p. 30.

women were 12 per cent before the rates were fixed, and 12.3 per cent afterwards, out of every dollar of sales. The net female labor cost was an increase of three mills on every dollar of sales. This applies to the industry as a whole. Variations in the effect on different types of stores indicate that wage legislation has an uneven influence. For example, in the Portland department, drygoods, and five-and-ten-cent stores, considered as one group, the result of the wages rates was an increased labor cost for women of 5.6 mills on a dollar of sales. At the same time, however, changes in the male labor force brought about a saving in labor cost so that the net increase on a dollar of sales for all employees was 4.3 mills. At this point there comes into play a readjustment in the organization of business that offsets the increased labor cost, and confirms the contention of minimum-wage advocates that wages may be increased without laying a proportionate burden upon the industry. As the report states, " the cost of labor was kept within the limits named largely by money-saving adjustments in the female non-selling and in the male selling force." [1]

In the neighborhood stores, those situated chiefly in the residential districts and employing a comparatively small staff, there was an increase of eight mills per dollar of sales. This was not connected with the wage legislation, but was due in part to the decrease in sales brought about by compliance with the six-o'clock closing regulations for women. This order hit especially those shops where most of the business is done after the downtown stores are closed. In the Salem stores the increased sales made by women resulted in a decrease in their labor cost of 1.2 cents per dollar of sales. At the same time, however, an increase took place in the cost of male labor, so that the net decrease in total labor cost amounted to nine mills per dollar of sales. An-

[1] *U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, op. cit.*, p. 33.

other group showing a decreased labor cost for women was the Portland specialty shops where there was a decrease of three mills per dollar of sales after the wage rates were fixed. But it should be noted that the wage determinations benefited women in these shops less than in any other group. As the report states, in the eleven shops of this type only about 12 per cent of the women employees were affected by the minimum-wage determinations. "Two stores ignored the determination for experienced adult women; others increased slightly the minors and adult apprentices; still others adopted the legal minimum for experienced adults as the beginning rate for experienced women in their stores in place of the somewhat higher rate formerly paid." [1]

Summarizing the most significant changes that followed the minimum-wage legislation in Oregon, it may be said that girls under eighteen years increased in numbers in the unskilled occupations, while inexperienced adult women decreased in actual numbers in the selling departments. Full-time inexperienced adult workers increased, however, most rapidly in the departments where experienced adult women decreased. While the legal minimum wage of $6 affected minors and inexperienced adults to the greatest extent, the minimum rate of pay was also raised for experienced adult workers, and the proportion receiving twelve dollars and over increased after the wage determinations. For the total number of women employed, average weekly earnings increased almost ten per cent. yet contrary to the frequent prediction, there was no substitution of men for women at the higher rates. Finally, there was an increase in labor cost, but this was offset to some extent by readjustments in the total employed group of men and women.

The results of a third experiment with the working of

[1] *U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, op. cit.*, p. 61.

wage legislation in this country are given in the Second Biennial Report of the Industrial Welfare Commission of the State of Washington, 1915-1916. They are embodied in a survey made of the employees, on the one hand, in mercantile establishments, and of employers, on the other, in mercantile establishments and various other lines of trade and industry. The data were collected in individual interviews and by questionnaires. No attempt was made at a careful examination of reliable business records. Blanks were distributed to employers with questions devised to check opinion by fact. Since only 25 per cent of the entire number returned them, "it seems safe to assume," states the Commission, "that this form of response may not have been desired by a large group of employers who, not being in sympathy with legislation of this character, were desirous of registering their protest against it; and that when confronted with the necessity of submitting facts rather than opinions, they concluded to make no response." [1]

The question naturally arises whether such results should not have suggested to the Commission some more effective way of getting at the actual working of the law. Of the employers from whom answers were obtained, some thought the law was not being enforced; some thought that "the law levels the efficient worker to the place of the minimum-wage class"; some objected to the law "because of the competition there is from states wherein there is no minimum-wage law"; and others state that "the minimum wage established by law has a tendency to diminish ambition in the employee for the reason that the worker feels that the employer will make the legal minimum the maximum that he will pay her." [2] This kind of evidence has

[1] *State of Washington Industrial Welfare Commission, Second Biennial Report*, p. 102.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

only the value of personal opinion, which in a disputed question like that of minimum-wage legislation is of very little import. The evidence that was gleaned from personal interviews with women employed in mercantile establishments, or from the questionnaires that they filled out, is no more satisfactory. About the most that can be said is that of the three thousand from whom the Commission attempted to get information, 874 (29 per cent) stated they were benefited through salary advances of from one dollar or less, to four dollars and more a week; 1267 (42.1 per cent) stated that the minimum-wage law had made no difference in their wage or work; only 28 reported that they were "held down" by the new wage law. Nearly three-tenths of the group made no comments either because they had not been at work before the passing of the law, or because they refused to give the information asked for.[1] Without confirmation from pay-roll data, these results are so untrustworthy as to be useless. This kind of report cannot be condemned too strongly.

Thus, with the evidence all in, it is obvious that American experience is as yet too meagre, and our methods of investigation too faulty to warrant anything more than the most tentative conclusions. It is noteworthy, however, that such guidance as we can get points to more extensive experiment with it. Nothing less than indisputable evidence of its impracticability can shake the faith of its advocates, and such testimony as we have at present can do nothing but confirm it. The most urgent need is for better methods of investigation of results, accompanying the continued and extended application of the principle of wage legislation.

NOTE.—The importance of a careful study of the effects of minimum-wage legislation in the United States can hardly be overstated. It is by

[1] *State of Washington Industrial Welfare Commission, op. cit.*, p. 136.

their actual operation that wage laws must finally be judged,—not by the assumptions or prejudices of their advocates and opponents. It is, therefore, desirable that an effort be made to examine in a scientific way the actual facts of the relation between wage legislation and industrial enterprise. This should include a study of the effect of minimum rates of pay on output, profits, prices, and the management of industry. In addition to this kind of inquiry, investigation should be made of the effect, if any, of wage legislation on general conditions of labor, on the matter of employment, trade-unionism, and the general welfare of the workers.

To meet the demands of such an inquiry, free access to factory records would be of primary importance, and this could be secured only if the study were made under the authority of the appropriate government agency, either state or federal. It should not be made by the group which fixed the wage rates, as, for example, in the case of the investigation by the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission of the working of their own wage decree in the brush industry. The findings, to command confidence, must be entirely free from the suspicion of partiality. They must be, in short, the results of an objective and scientific examination.

At present no evidence of this kind is available in the industrial field in the United States. Such evidence as we have is at best meagre, incomplete, and open to the charge of bias. At worst, as in the case of the reported working of the law in Washington, it is thoroughly untrustworthy. The study of the effects of minimum-wage legislation in Oregon, which is the best that has been made, is confined to its operation in department stores. By this time it is reasonable to believe that some real value could be derived from an adequate inquiry into the working of wage laws in the factories of Oregon and Washington and in those factory industries in which wage decrees have been made in Massachusetts. For evidence of this kind, gleaned from our own American experience, the sound progress of wage legislation waits.

CHAPTER VII

Trade-Unionism and Women's Wages

The opposition to the application of minimum-wage laws to men has been peculiar to the labor movement in the United States. It has been based in part on the unwillingness to admit a rival method of obtaining those benefits which constitute the inducement to join the trade union. It is possible to interpret this action as a narrow policy of restriction, but it has, we believe, a much broader and sounder foundation. Employers in this country have not yet accepted the practice of collective bargaining as an intrinsic and necessary part of modern industrial policy. On the whole they regard trade unions openly or secretly with antagonism. In view of this attitude it is to be expected that organized labor will take no chances with a movement that bears even a suspicion of undermining its strength.

That men should thus repudiate for themselves a method that they endorse for women workers, would indicate their lack of faith in voluntary associated effort among women. In spite of considerable evidence to the contrary, the belief still persists that the trade union among women is but a continued effort to organize an unorganizable group of workers, and that the state must continue to safeguard them as a set unable to protect themselves.

Looking at the matter in the large, both the minimum-wage movement and the trade-union movement are the result of labor and not sex problems. If the method of fixing a minimum wage for women is sound, it should be no less

sound for men. If collective bargaining is accepted as a necessary part of the distributive process, it is no less necessary for women than for men. There is no longer a clear-cut division between legislation and trade-unionism as methods for dealing with the labor problems of women on the one hand and of men on the other. The two have become closely intermingled as far as adult labor is concerned and promise to become even more so. While legislation has been the most common way of safeguarding women's interests, the development of labor organization among women has shown a steady and consistent growth, the leading features of which are so little known that it may not be amiss to outline them briefly.

For nearly a century now, women wage-earners have resorted to collective action and used the strike to secure shorter hours and better pay. As early as 1825 tailoresses in New York City clubbed together for self-protection against the inevitable consequences of reduced and inadequate wages. Strikes of cotton-mill operatives were not infrequent in the decade between 1830 and 1840. Some of these, as, for example, the Dover strike in 1834 and the Lowell strike in the same year, involved as many as 800 workers protesting against a reduction of wages. The organization of these groups seems to have been spontaneous and temporary, holding together only until the immediate grievance had been redressed, or breaking-up in the face of failure. The most formal organization of which we have record was that of the women shoebinders of Lynn who in 1833 founded "The Female Society of Lynn and Vicinity for the Protection and Promotion of Female Industry." [1] Their constitution provided for quarterly dues, for a price committee, for the expulsion of members not

[1] *Report on the Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners*, vol. x, p. 41.

complying with the regulations and prices adopted from time to time, for certain benefit funds to relieve the wants of such members of the society as might be fit subjects of charity in the opinion of the standing committee—provisions common to trade-union constitutions of the present time. A remarkable feature of the organization was that it was made up of home workers. The binding of shoes was not a factory industry; hence the organization lacked the more promising condition of collective action which is present in a group of women working in a common workplace. Scattered throughout their individual homes, they finally were driven into united action by the low piece rates that no length of working day would total into an amount that would provide the necessaries of life. The organization seems to have been successful in regulating prices; but after an existence of some six months the union began to show signs of weakness. More than three-fourths of the members had broken the constitution either by working for less than the union scale of rates or by failing to pay their dues. In spite of resolutions to strengthen the organization, it appears to have broken up entirely.

These and similar instances of trade-union spirit and activity indicate that women have had their part in labor organization from the very beginning of the movement in this country. It is not, however, until after 1890 that trade-union organization among industrial women achieves any real importance as a permanent force. In the fifty years between 1840 and 1890 there are two separate phases of the labor movement, both having distinct bearing upon trade-union policy. The first period, which may be said to have ended at the outbreak of the Civil War, was clearly distinguished by a strong humanitarian spirit, lofty social enthusiasms, and more or less vague plans of social reform. It was the age of Brook Farm and other Utopian experi-

ments. "Not a reading man but has a draft of a new community in his waistcoat pocket," wrote Emerson to Carlyle in 1840. Members of the Brook Farm community were leading spirits in the organization of the New England Workingmen's Association, made up of men and women, trade-unionists and social-reformers. The evils of long hours and of the factory system were discussed at the annual conventions. Resolutions were passed denouncing the over-crowded conditions in factory boarding-houses, the fourteen-hour system of labor and the short time allowed for meals. From the specific criticism of working conditions, however, the conventions frequently departed into wider fields of social interest. The question of women's rights, the problem of slavery, the character of modern social organization, and the need for a radical change that should insure "a fair and general distribution of the profits of labor"—debate on questions of this type was mingled with those more directly connected with earnings and hours of labor.

On the whole, however, it was a period notable for a vigorous labor agitation of the most practical kind, which centered in the demand for the ten-hour day. The most spirited attempt to secure the shorter working day by striking for it was made by girls in the cotton mills of Western Pennsylvania in 1844. The immediate outcome was failure, but the invincible spirit of the leaders is indicated by one of them who wrote to the Pittsburgh *Spirit of Liberty*.

> We have been asked whether we do not intend to give up the effort to introduce the ten-hour system, since the operatives have returned to work on the old terms. Certainly not . . . We have made arrangements for continuing the warfare by meetings, associations, etc., a correspondence will be opened with the operatives eastward, a publication devoted to the cause is projected, and we have received the first number of

a monthly tract commenced by the Lowell operatives since the strike took place.

This spirit was matched by the textile workers in New England, especially in Lowell and Manchester. As a result of this agitation conducted chiefly by workingwomen themselves, ten-hour legislation was enacted successively in New Hampshire (1847), Maine (1848), Pennsylvania (1848), New Jersey (1851), and Rhode Island (1853). It must not be inferred that the ten-hour day was thus established and upheld by law. The practice of "contracting" out was permitted, and manufacturers generally refused to employ those who would not make individual contracts to work for longer hours. But the movement marked the initial move of protective labor legislation — a method of defense destined to become increasingly effective as its form and administration were technically perfected. Industrial women of half a dozen states were working in a common cause, an experience tending to deepen and strengthen solidarity and coöperation. Under the leadership of such women as Sarah G. Bagley and Hulda J. Stone, who had themselves worked in cotton factories, a stirring publicity campaign was waged. In spite of half-organized and generally unsuccessful strikes the activity of united industrial women had a far-reaching influence upon public opinion and the later course of labor legislation.

Lack of continuity is a marked characteristic of the labor movement. Periods of vigorous agitation and a strong show of trade-union spirit and policy have alternated with periods of inactivity when reliance upon voluntary combined effort to redress the ever-existing grievances would seem to have been entirely discarded. The long financial depression that followed the panic of 1837, followed by the first appreciable invasion of American industry by Irish immigrants, put a quietus upon the active labor movement

of the early thirties. Similarly, the even more vigorous movement of the forties and fifties declined with the outbreak of the Civil War.

In the years following the close of the war there was another revival of trade-union spirit. This was displayed most effectively among the laundry workers in Troy and the shoe workers in Lynn. The Laundry Workers' Union appears to have been in a flourishing condition as early as April of 1866, for it was able to contribute at that time $1000 from its treasury to aid the striking iron moulders of that city. Two years later they gave $500 to aid striking bricklayers in New York City. The laundry workers are said to have raised their wages through organized effort from $8 to $14 a week. In 1869, however, a demand for another increase in wages met the determined opposition of the employers, with which was combined a decision to break up entirely the workers' organization. In spite of the support of public opinion and notwithstanding substantial financial aid from the molders' union, the women were defeated and the union crushed.

The shoe workers were distinguished by having the only national organization of women trade-unionists in the United States. Their local organizations flourished. Thirty of them were represented at the third general convention in 1871. But the national organization, together with others, practically disintegrated in the industrial depression that began in 1873.

Numerous local organizations were formed among workers in the sewing trades from New York to Detroit, among the cap makers, umbrella sewers and others. After years of opposition women were admitted in 1869 to the International Typographical Union. The first charter ever granted by a men's trade union to women working at the same trade was granted in that year to the Women's Typographical Union, No. 1, of New York.

Besides what may be called *bona fide* trade unions there were more general organizations of mixed membership and with purposes secondary to the labor interest. Such, for example, was the Working Women's Association of New York—formed under the leadership of the woman's suffrage group. There was also the National Labor Union which held annual conventions from 1866 to 1872. In this organization, too, such suffragists as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were active, but trade-union organization was the primary interest and it was encouraged in every possible way.

By 1876 the entire labor movement in America came under the influence of the Knights of Labor and for nearly ten years it was profoundly affected by the policies and methods of that body. For women the experience of membership in this order was unique in that for the first time they were encouraged to join an organization on an equal footing with men and with equal powers. A special department of women's work was created to collect information about women at work and a general investigator, Mrs. Leonora M. Barry, a woman of practical industrial experience, was paid to give all her time to the task of "interesting, organizing and educating working women." For three years she did tireless work as an organizer and student of industrial women, in all parts of the country. The result of her efforts did not justify to herself (although this opinion was not shared by many of the Knights of Labor) the hope with which she had started the organization of women. The outcome of her experience was the recommendation that the Women's Department be given up and more lecturers sent out to tell why women "should organize as a part of the industrial hive, rather than because they are women." With the resignation of Mrs. Barry, no one else was found to assume the responsibility of the department

and the interest in women's organizations shared the general decline in the influence of the Knights of Labor which set in during the late eighties. The labor movement from that time becomes identified with the rising importance of the American Federation of Labor.

For women the period is especially notable in that for the first time their trade unions became continuous permanent organizations, and became national in scope. Nearly 75 years had passed since cotton-mill operatives and tailoresses had resorted to the strike. Repeated use had been made of this weapon of industrial defense. But in spite of experience of organized effort, in spite of the more or less constant agitation of the problems of working women by sympathizers in other classes and the educational policy of the more far-sighted of their own members, nothing more than a few years' duration had been achieved in any organization.

The first group of women to effect the organization of a permanent trade union appears to have been in the hat industry. The Hat Trimmers' Union, composed of workers who trim and bind men's hats, was organized in Danbury, Connecticut, in 1885, and in Boston in 1886. This is almost entirely a woman's organization. There are a few men, but their number is negligible, and the conduct of the union's affairs has always been entirely in the hands of the women. Up to the present there has been no national organization, although strong locals exist in New York and New Jersey, Massachusetts and Connecticut—locals that are affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

In various other trades permanent organizations consisting of women only have also been effected—organizations of bookbinders, boot and shoe workers, men's ready-made clothing, glove workers, tobacco workers, and others. Where women are sufficiently numerous to organize locals

of their own, separate unions are likely to be formed. It is not unusual now for men and women to combine forces, however, or for men to admit women into organizations for years closed to them—a practice which is indicative of the changed status of women's collective action. "Leaders in men's unions, both national and local, seem to have much more faith than formerly in women's unions." [1]

Besides having achieved permanency and a degree of organization that entitles the movement to be taken seriously, women have also achieved nation-wide organization. As Miss Henry says, "to organize a trade on a national scale is at best a slow process, and it naturally takes a much longer time for women to influence and enter into the administrative work of a national union than of a separate local union which perhaps they have helped to found. They are therefore too apt to lose touch with the big national union, and even with its local branch in their own city." [2] Even where continuous organization has been attained, the labor movement among women has been essentially local in character, and thus it has been limited in its range of effective influence. With the advent of the National Women's Trade Union League in 1904 the organizations of women workers on a national scale may be said to have begun. The growth of trade-unionism among women is very closely bound up with the League, which is a federation of women's unions with an individual membership composed of those women who sympathize with the trade-union movement although they themselves are outside the ranks of industrial workers. The Women's Trade Union League was the first organization to devote itself to the promotion of trade unions for women wage-earners on a nation-wide scale.

[1] *Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage Earners*, vol. x, p. 152.

[2] Henry, A., *The Trade Union Woman*, p. 42.

In this respect it differs from the early Labor Reform leagues, and from such protective associations as the Working Women's Association of New York and the Working Women's Protective Union. This and similar bodies including in their membership non-industrial women, have supported vigorously and effectively the cause of the woman wage-earner in the labor struggle—but no other movement has been as single-minded in its devotion to the organization of women into trade unions, which should be affiliated with the regular labor movement as represented in the American Federation of Labor. "The League," so Miss Marot tells us,[1] "was tolerated in its early years, and many trade-union officers regarded it indulgently as a passing whim," but that attitude has long since passed — dispelled by the convincing demonstration of sincerity and integrity of aim and motive. Such success as attended the huge strikes in the sewing trades in 1910-1911 was in large measure due to the backing of the National League and the local branches especially in New York and Chicago. To incessant calls for help in time of strike, or in the task of organizing, the League has responded generously with moral and financial support. It is probably not too much to say that to the League should be credited the strongest single influence in the marked growth of trade-unionism among women, especially since 1911.

Two features of the policy of the League call for special mention because of their bearing upon the future of the trade-union movement among women. First, the national character of the League. Twelve local branches now represent the organization—from Boston to Los Angeles. At the biennial conventions, delegates from the leading industrial states meet in a common cause. The labor problem is discussed in all its phases, and representatives of organized

[1] Marot, H., *op. cit.*, p. 76.

women in many different trades formulate common policies. This means training in practical coöperation. It results in a widening of the mental horizon. It makes for a solidarity of interest. Up to the present time, five biennial conventions have been held, and each shows increasing vigor in debate, greater skill and adroitness in handling the issues involved, and a strengthening of faith in the movement for which it stands.

The second feature of the League's policy that deserves attention is the emphasis that it has laid upon the rôle of leadership by the members of the industrial group, and the subordination of the allies, or the members without trade affiliation. The local branches are becoming officered almost exclusively by wage-earning women, and the direction of local affairs rests chiefly in their hands. The League has taken wage-earning women from the ranks of workers and put them into the labor field as paid organizers. It has gone even further since 1913 and has established formal training classes for such organizers. "Many a girl," said Mrs. Raymond Robins, in her presidential address in 1913, "many a girl capable of leadership and service is held within the ranks because neither she as an individual nor her organization has money enough to set her free for service. Will it be possible for the National Women's Trade Union League to establish a school for women organizers even though in the beginning it may be only a training class, offering every trade-union girl a scholarship for a year? Since then, in coöperation with the University of Chicago and Northwestern University, a few months of special training has been given to a number of trade-union girls in preparation for more effective work as organizers.

This kind of support is full of promise for the trade-union movement among women. The affiliated membership consists now of 125,000 workers, most of them industrial

women. This number represents what has been described as the size of the group on a peace basis. It is the permanent organization that is the backbone of the labor world. With this strength attained and with the forces at work to conserve it and increase it, one may consider that the sporadic efforts of women labor leaders for at least seventy years have at last met with assured success. Will wage legislation be a setback to this movement? The question may be answered best by considering it in relation to certain well-defined obstacles that continue to beset its advance. These are, (1) the fact that women are largely unskilled workers; (2) that they are temporary wage-earners; and (3) that they are not accorded the same recognition as men in the labor field.

Generally speaking, the chances of success in organization, whether among men or women, is in direct proportion to the skill of an occupation. Work that demands labor of a high grade, work that demands formal training, technical or practical, and perhaps both, is a promising field for the trade union. The effectiveness of the most important weapon of trade-unionism—the strike or the threat of it—depends largely upon the extent to which the work is monopolized by the men who are doing it. Moreover, dues and assessments must be paid from weekly wages. There must be financial support for the mutual aid of members, and all this involves a drain upon the purse which can be met only by the better-paid workers. It becomes worth the while of workers with training and skill to protect their special property interests, and they will pay for the benefits of permanent forms of labor organization. There are, to be sure, labor unions among unskilled workers, for example, the miners, and the longshoremen, but the general statement holds that the trade-union movement in the United States is made up of the aristocracy of the labor world.

Judged by this test, it is easy to understand with what difficulty women have made and are making progress in organization. The great majority, as we have seen, are at the lowest levels of the wage scale. They are doing the simplest kinds of industrial work, work at which they may be replaced quickly and easily. They are most threatened by changes in methods of manufacture, by the introduction of new machinery, or by the recurring tides of immigration that bring prospective wage-earners under an even greater economic pressure than their own. In the cotton textile factories, for example, where women almost monopolized the industry a hundred years ago, they have been gradually losing ground, due somewhat to the use of new and heavier machinery which required more rapid work than they could do, but due also, and in large measure, to the coming-in of immigrant men who were willing to work for what had been considered women's wages or even less. The work that women do in the cotton factories can be done in many instances by children, an indication of the ease with which their places can be filled. Efforts to organize unions among textile workers in Texas failed because too many children were employed.[1]

In this type of work the difficulty of organizing any effective control is obviously very great. Added to this is the difficulty of creating financial support from within the group itself. Ten to twenty-five cents a month are the common dues. In the Hat Trimmers' Union of Danbury, Conn., the dues are only five cents a month. It goes without saying that a very large membership is necessary to make possible dues as low as these. "Fifty cents a month," says Miss Henry, "is the smallest sum upon which any organization can pay its way to produce tangible benefits for its members."[2]

[1] *Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-earners*, vol. x, p. 177.

[2] Henry, A., *op. cit.*, p. 142.

The type of work with its low earnings is, then, the first great difficulty to contend with in women's organization. In this situation, with the increased earnings it secures, wage legislation would seem to be a direct aid to organization. We have seen in an earlier chapter that this in fact has been the result in the tailoring trade in England, and also in the chain-making industry. Leaders in the women's trade-union movement in this country have supported wage laws in part for the very reason that workers who receive a living wage are a more easily organized group.

The second obstacle is in the attitude of women themselves, due to their temporary stay in the industry. From five to seven years is the average length of the girl's wage-earning life. Without implying that her thought and attention are exclusively upon marriage, it is safe to say that the large majority of girls look forward to it in the more or less immediate future, and work in the factory is only a necessary occupation in the interval between leaving school and having a home of their own. During this interval, moreover, "the exaggerated expectations girls entertain as to the improvement in their lot which marriage will bring them is one of the chief adverse influences that any organization composed of women or containing many women members has to reckon with." [1] Truth to say, many a girl remains at factory work much longer than she had expected and many a one returns to the wage-earning ranks, but this is not the assumption that the girl of sixteen or seventeen is most likely to make.

This sort of wage-earning does not in itself make for interest in an organization that demands sacrifice of time and money. Its advantages are remote and generally highly problematical. Its drawbacks are immediate and assured. To quote Miss Henry again,

[1] Henry, A., *op. cit.*, p. 218.

the majority of the workers are yet at the play age. They are still at the stage when play is one of the rightful conditions under which they carry on their main business of growing up. Many of them are not ready to be in the factory at all. Certainly not for eight, ten, or twelve hours a day. And so those young things, after an unthankful and exhausting day's toil, are not going to attend meetings unless these can be made attractive to them. And the meetings that may appear entirely right and even attractive to the man of thirty or forty will be tiresome and boring past endurance to the girl of sixteen or eighteen.[1]

One would hardly attempt to argue that wage laws will have any appreciable effect upon the length of a girl's wage-earning life or that they will in themselves make trade-union business meetings attractive to young women. But it is reasonable to believe that they will change substantially the attitude of women toward their industrial experience, and their reaction will be radically different from that at present. For one thing, they will tend to mitigate the most pressing financial difficulties in the working girl's life. The grinding pressure of an inadequate wage will be lifted. Work will offer an opportunity for living that is now wholly denied. We are already familiar with the difference in attitude between employees who work for a management that treats them "fairly" — in a way above the common run of employers—and those who do not. The increased personal interest in the work, the pride of being part of such a business—these and other factors tend to create a body of more efficient employees, and more productive economically. Such employees are not searching eagerly for an escape from the "trouble and toil of wage labor." Although they, too, expect to remain in the shop or factory only a short time, they can regard their industrial experi-

[1] Henry, A., *op. cit.*, p. 147.

ence with pleasure and satisfaction, and not, as less fortunate ones, with aversion and disgust. The improvement of the wage-earning status of working girls and women will have, we believe, just such an outcome. To the extent that this is accomplished, will the way be prepared for a closer identification of personal interest with the whole body of permanent and temporary wage-earners and a recognized individual part in the solution of their problems.

To the difficulties in organizing women which arise from the nature of their work and from their brief stay in industry is added the third great obstacle of the attitude of men both as co-workers and as employers. The change from the domestic to the factory system of industry made new boundaries of work for men and women. The distinction between men's and women's work has been blurred, wiped out, and periodically retraced with the development of machine industry. Trades, such as the cotton textile and clothing trade, for the most part carried on by women under the domestic system, have gradually passed into the hands of men. In the making of boots and shoes, women are doing today what was men's work a century ago. Active competition of men and women in the same work rarely exists, but a continual substitution of women for men and men for women goes on.

The position of men and women as fellow-workers in industry is a new one and one to which men have not taken kindly. This is accounted for chiefly by the fact that the average man thinks of women in relation to the home. It may be a necessity but it is also a misfortune that wives and daughters should be employed at wage labor. "We must strive to obtain sufficient remuneration for our labor to keep the wives and daughters and sisters of our people at home," said the Philadelphia Trades Union in an open

letter in 1835.[1] "You cannot recede from labor all at once," declared the president of the Philadelphia Trades Assembly in a Fourth-of-July oration that same year,

for then you would have no means of subsistence; but you can form societies of those who work at the same business; and all those societies can form a females' trade union, and a formidable one it would be too. When that is done you can raise the wages of your several productions, and thus live on less labor; then raise again, so that half the labor now performed will suffice to live upon, and the less you do the more there will be for the men to do and the better they will be paid for doing it, and ultimately you will be what you ought to be, free from the performance of that kind of labor which was designed for man alone to perform. Then will you who are wives be able to devote your time to your families and your homes; then will you be able to attend to the cultivation of your mind, and impart virtuous instruction to your children; then will you be able to appreciate the value and realize the blessings of the connubial state. And you who are unmarried can then enjoy those innocent amusements and recreations so essential to health and qualify yourself for the more sober duties of wives, mothers, and matrons.[2]

The same feeling persists to some extent today, as was shown, for example, just after the signing of the armistice when certain labor men appealed to women to return to the domestic pursuits which they were pictured to have left to engage in industry for patriotic reasons. But there are signs which point to a changed attitude. Labor leaders among men feel the necessity of accepting women as a permanent factor in industrial work. They certainly have given up hope of keeping them out of factory and shop, and one hears

[1] *Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage Earners*, vol. x, p. 47.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

less, though still more than enough, of the natural division of labor between men and women based on their respective places in and out of the home.

Another potent reason for opposition to women as fellow-workers has been their willingness to work for low wages. In this respect the attitude of trade-union men has been similar to their attitude towards the immigrant male laborer —another group that has threatened wages by their willingness to work for low pay, and one that has likewise received little consideration because of special difficulties in the way of organization. This opposition obviously should be moderated by minimum-wage laws, and there should be a revised appraisal of women as wage-earners, and a more extended and hearty recognition of their part in the labor movement.

The cheapness of women's labor, which has made them a menace to the interests of the whole labor group, has enhanced their desirability in the eyes of the employer. The presence of a supply of cheap labor has made it profitable to divide and subdivide industrial processes, to introduce machinery and to accomplish a reduction in the wage scale. The possible influence of trade unions in destroying this advantage has been one of the reasons for the determined opposition of employers toward women's organizations, especially when they have begun to show perceptible signs of strength. "Before organization, or while a union is still small, employers rarely concern themselves with the matter, as the chances of an effective women's union appear too slight to concern them. But when once an organization has attained size and strength, employers have almost always set themselves to break it up, and have usually succeeded." [1] This has been the situation in the tobacco trade

[1] *Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-earners*, vol. x, p. 145.

and to some extent among cigar makers, in the boot and shoe trade and also among the garment workers. The attitude of the telegraph companies and that of department store heads has even to the present time effectually prevented organization. The attitude of employers toward women's organization, however, is in large part due to their general opposition "on principle" to trade-unionism. In the recognition they must eventually give to labor's voice in industry women doubtless will share equally with men. The enforcing of minimum rates of pay will eliminate the excessive cheapness of women's labor and give employers a different idea of the worth of women as wage-earners. To that extent it should modify the hostility that the men have towards them as a class of cheap labor.

We have still to reckon with the opposition of men to the admission of women to their labor unions even when they fully meet the requirements of membership. This has been shown recently in the case of the women street-car conductors in Cleveland, where the men of the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees went out on strike to enforce their demand for the dismissal of the 150 women conductors. The women were all self-supporting, two-thirds of them supporting also children and parents. Twenty-six had husbands or sons in the army. *They* were employed at the same wages as men and subject to all other conditions applicable to men. There was no evidence that the work was beyond their physical powers nor that the surroundings were disagreeable or undesirable. The women had applied for admittance to the union, which has a closed-shop agreement with the Cleveland Company, but both the local and national officers had refused them on the ground that it would thereby extend to the women protection against dismissal. This dismissal they had evidently determined to bring about as soon as

conditions were favorable. Accordingly, after the signing of the armistice they struck for this sole object. The National War Labor Board supported them on the ground that women had been employed because of the shortage of men withdrawn for military service, but with the signing of the armistice and the return of men from war industries and from the camps they no longer were needed. Hence they recommended that the Street Railway Company comply with the demands of the Amalgamated Association and dismiss the women conductors. This case raises the issue of the unions' attitude towards women's right to equal industrial opportunity with men. In so far as men demand a monopoly of an occupation which can be equally well carried on by women, they are setting a precedent for antagonism where there should be coöperation. They are substantially holding to a narrow policy of exclusion that might be effective perhaps in highly skilled trades, but such a policy is self-defeating in unskilled or semi-skilled work. For, as one writer has put it, "even though employers may be forced to turn off the women for a while, they will not fail sooner or later to turn to such a force of experienced female labor. And the women, many of whom will probably have been suffering from unemployment, unorganized and without machinery for holding up the wage scale, are not likely to resist successfully the undercutting of the men's rates." From this point of view it is surely wiser for the men to admit women to their unions and to require them to be paid according to the men's wage scale.

Women already have reached a stage of class consciousness as workers that is bound to result in a much greater extension of voluntary organized effort, both to get the benefit of laws passed in their interest and to secure for themselves gains outside the scope of legal regulation. As for minimum-wage rates, they simply provide a basic wage.

They do not thereby determine, necessarily, labor's share of the common product of labor and capital. It must be at least sufficient to support a normal standard of living, but it may very well be more than that. Anything obtained above the basic wage will depend largely upon the degree of effectiveness of collective bargaining.

We have tried to make it clear that the trade-union movement had already established itself on a sure and permanent basis before the advent of minimum-wage laws, and that in so far as this legislation has any effect at all, it will probably tend to advance rather than to retard its development. Other forces are at work to strengthen it. The protection of the interests of women workers in the difficult period of adjustment that follows the war, and the participation of women in the claims and gains of the general labor world, can be effected only through combined action. To this fact women themselves are keenly alive.

The war has proved that the range of possibilities for women in industry is much wider than it has been assumed to be in the past. It has given a new impetus to the trade-union movement, and this is evident in the effort that the Women's Trade Union League is putting forth for equality of industrial opportunity for women with men; for equal pay for equal work; and for the same opportunity with men for vocational training.

CHAPTER VIII

Vocational Education and Women's Wages

Five years ago a national commission made a vigorous report on the need of vocational education in the United States. Recognizing that "many and different kinds and grades of vocational education will always be required," the Commission maintained that "the kind most urgently demanded at the present time is that which will prepare workers for the more common occupations in which the great mass of our people find useful employment." "There is a great need," the Commission said,

> of providing vocational education of this character for every part of the United States—to conserve and develop our resources; to promote a more productive and prosperous agriculture; to prevent the waste of human labor; to supplement apprenticeship; to increase the wage-earning power of our productive workers; to meet the increasing demand for trained workmen; to offset the increased cost of living.

No less urgent than the economic need, they asserted, was the social and educational need. "Widespread vocational training," they stated,

> will democratize the education of the country: (1) By recognizing different tastes and abilities and by giving an equal opportunity to all to prepare for their life work; (2) by extending education through part-time and evening instruction to those who are at work in the shop or on the farm. Vocational training will indirectly but positively affect the aims

and methods of general education: (1) By developing a better teaching process through which the children who do not respond to book instruction alone may be reached and educated through learning by doing; (2) by introducing into our educational system the aim of utility, to take its place in dignity by the side of culture and to connect education with life by making it purposeful and useful. Industrial and social unrest is due in large measure to a lack of a system of practical education fitting workers for their callings. Higher standards of living are a direct result of the better education which makes workers more efficient thus increasing their wage earning capacity.[1]

Overwhelming testimony in behalf of vocational training came to the commission from "every class of citizenship—from the educator, the manufacturer, the trades-unionist, the business man, the social worker and the philanthropist."

The findings of the Commission were sufficiently convincing to secure the passage of a bill providing millions of dollars for the promotion of vocational training on a nation-wide scale. According to the bill, this much-needed training is extended to girls as well as to boys. Section eleven provides that the controlling purpose of the education aided by national grants shall be "to fit for useful employment," and that "it shall be designed to meet the needs of persons over fourteen years of age who are preparing for a trade or industrial pursuit." This provision is notable in that it makes no sex distinction in vocational training. It does not support the stand so frequently taken that the most important training a girl can have is for the career as wife, mother and homemaker; that the subjects to emphasize in her vocational education are cooking, sewing, home sanitation and decoration, motherhood and the care of children.

[1] *Report of the Commission on National Aid to Vocational Education*, vol. i, p. 12.

When this point was raised in the hearings held by the Commission, those who testified made it clear that in their opinion vocational education for girls must mean training for wage-earning and not for home-making. When asked specifically whether vocational training should be directed to a girl's preparation for her own home, one witness replied,

Home making—I think homes are made by men and women, not by women, and if that is a preparation, then the training of boys and girls should be the same. That is, do not let us everlastingly put the girl off in a corner making bows when she might make a much better carpenter than the boy. Forget, if you can, in education for a while that this is a female and that is a male. Here are people with hands to be made useful in order that they may do things. If a girl can drive a nail better than a boy, don't call her a tomboy for doing it. That is the way we twist these things. And if a boy can sew on a button better than a girl, why, let him sew on his buttons.[1]

Another witness when asked whether girls should have an equal chance with boys for training in the skilled trades, replied, "I think so . . . . and I think, perhaps, if they are looking forward to marriage and the home, it is more beneficial that they do this." The defense of this opinion will bear quoting. "I believe," the witness continued,

"there is nothing so fatal to a right attitude toward family service than [*sic*] the waste of the time from the school to marriage in looking for a husband and having a good time in the form of self-indulgence and of idleness. Therefore, I believe that to be busy at a worthy occupation during that time is most necessary to keep a woman in the right attitude of responsibility and of devotion that will make her a good wife and mother.

[1] *Report of the Commission on National Aid to Vocational Education*, vol. ii, p. 195.

. . . The large number of widows or of married women forced to support their children or to contribute toward the support of a family, who are in almost every industry open to women [shows] that a woman never knows what moment she may have to go back to some form of wage earning, and not only for self, as the unmarried woman does, but for others dependent upon her. I believe that the courage that she has in meeting her family responsibilities is tremendously increased by the consciousness that if she need ever do it she may. . . . I believe that every argument of self-respect, of unselfish devotion, and courageous facing of life demands that a woman have a skill developed to the degree of worthy self-support.[1]

Not only witnesses before the Commission, but members of the Commission themselves expressed the opinion that the proposed bill should develop women's wage-earning power and provide equal opportunities with men for vocational training.

From this standpoint, instruction in home economics should be given, as one authority holds, "in specialized courses planned and followed for the purpose of earning a livelihood."[2] The same writer goes on to say,

opportunities are coming up . . . for numerous wage-earning and salaried callings, which are based upon a very practical as well as a scientific knowledge of home economics, such as invalid cookery, special cookery, catering to a special demand for such things as cakes, candy, pickles, preserves, etc.—caterers, heads of tea rooms, lunch rooms, and gift shops, dieticians and boarding-house and institutional managers.[3]

There is suggested here a wide and promising field where

[1] *Report of the Commission on National Aid to Vocational Education*, vol. ii, p. 243.

[2] *U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Bulletin 162*, p. 62.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

perhaps the most capable girls could put to commercial use the kind of training that might be given in a good practical arts department. There is an even wider vocational opportunity in the field of domestic service—practically the only other field into which the girls who go into industry might go in any number. Here, I am aware, one touches on a perplexing and many-sided problem. There is more than the question of training involved—there is the greatest obstacle in the conditions under which the work is done. The attitude of working girls themselves towards domestic service has been strikingly set forth in the reports of the Commission on Household Employment of the Y. W. C. A. Through the coöperation of the Y. W. C. A. clubs, the opinions were obtained of 112 young women engaged in domestic service, and of 137 in factories on the question of the respective advantages of household employment and factory work. A summary of their replies shows a striking unanimity of opinion. All agreed that domestic service as an occupation had the advantages of good wages, health, and preparation for a girl's own home after marriage. All were equally agreed that the advantages of factory work lay in the shorter, fixed, and regular hours; the greater opportunity for social life and recreation and self-development; greater opportunity for marriage, and higher social standing. "Putting the issue squarely before young women who have to earn their own living," says the writer of the report, "which set of advantages are they likely to choose?" "We have seen," she continues,

> from the discussion on the reports from domestic workers themselves that they are not enthusiastic about advising other young women to enter their occupation, the advantages of health, wages, preparation for the future not counterbalancing the present disantadvantages of long hours, lack of place to entertain, dearth of social life and recreation, no opportunity for self-direction and self-development.

To secure the impartial judgment of young women in store, office, and factory work, the following question was asked: "Suppose a friend or your younger sister should come to you and say: 'I have to begin to work; do you think it would be better for me to go into a factory or domestic service?' The point of interest," says the report,

in analyzing the answers to this question was to discover by what criterion these young women judged an occupation. Admitting there are advantages on both sides, which advantages really count? The result showed an overwhelming majority for the advantages on the side of factory, store, or office work. A curious thing is noticeable in the reasoning which the girls use in recommending household employment. They seem to choose an altogether new basis for their advise. Almost no mention is made of the advantages which they admitted belonged to household employment, namely, health, wages, preparation for the duties of a wife. Their basis for advising household employment is, "If she has no home or parents to look after her." The possibility that the financial situation must have had at least an unconscious influence on this answer is indicated by the fact that these girls who speak of the need of getting a substitute home are the poorly paid factory girls who probably could not be comfortable on their salaries unless they were subsidized by their homes. The fact that domestic service pays well—at least gives shelter—would make it a refuge for the young unskilled orphan. . . . The admitted advantages of household work had little bearing on the answers. They were practically discounted in the advice given to sisters or friends. Health, upon which such stress was laid is scarcely mentioned. No thought seems to be given to the fact that more money can be saved by the household worker. The advantages which count are time, recreation, and social life, living at home, freedom of action, opportunity for self-improvement and advancement.

No better guide could be furnished than is offered by this

report to a solution of the problem of domestic service. It is a complete explanation of why girls may be searching for employment in factories while hundreds of calls for domestic servants go unheeded. The lack of domestic help has become so great that housekeepers, realizing that some concession must be made to the working girl's point of view, are planning their work accordingly. They are willing to help in the experiments that are being made to change the status of the household worker, and to make domestic service an actual alternative to factory work. These experiments are being made through classes that train girls and women specifically for wage-earning domestic service. From these classes a girl may be obtained for either general or specialized work. Their hours are determinate. They do not live in the homes of their employers. They have, in short, a status similar to that of the factory girl as far as their working conditions are concerned. It is too soon to venture an opinion as to the success of these experiments in making domestic service an actual competitor of factory work. It is, to say the least, a suggestive start in discovering the economic resources that are as yet practically unknown in the field of women's traditional work. Should this field develop as an effective rival of industrial work, the unfavorable concentration of women in factory occupations would be decreased, bringing some measure of release from the pressure of numbers that keeps wages down to their present level.

Within the field of industry, that is, of manufacturing, the question of formal training must start with an analysis of what occupations there are for which to train. At present such skilled work as there is for women centers in the use of a few tools. It requires the use of the sewing machine, run by foot or electric power, the paste or paint brush, and the needle. Training for the sewing trades is especially im-

portant, since it opens such a large field for skilled work. In some cities it is women's sole opportunity. In Cleveland, for example, Mr. Lutz says in his report on Wage Earning and Education, "practically no other industrial occupations in which large numbers of women are employed possess sufficient technical content to warrant the establishment of training courses in the schools," [1] and that, therefore, "the industrial training for girls will consist in the main of preparation for the sewing trades." The present facilities for the training of girls in these types of work are by no means adequate, as witness, for example, the long waiting list at the Manhattan Trade School. They should be greatly increased.

The effect of such training upon wages is shown clearly in a recent study of the industrial experience of trade-school girls in Massachusetts. Comparing the wages of girls for dressmaking in the trade school with those of girls trained in the trade itself, the report states "the greatest difference is found in the initial stage." Trade-school girls received $1.20 more to start with than trade-trained girls. This difference, as the writer of the report observes, is "easily accounted for, as the trade-school girl is usually a little older at beginning work, and her years in the trade school have given her some of the fundamental preparation, so that she generally commences as a worker instead of as an errand girl, stock girl, examiner, or cleaner." This difference in initial wage in favor of the school-trained girl lends support to the argument for raising the present age limit for beginning work, and suggests the effect that trade training might have in decreasing the present concentration at the lowest points in the wage scale. The report goes on to show that the trade-school girls maintain the advantage up to the tenth

[1] *Cleveland Education Survey*, Wage Earning and Education, pp. 99, 100.

year, "after which the difference in the number of the two groups makes the figures of little significance." In general, the records of trade schools show a higher initial wage for girls who have taken the training, an advantage which is maintained with varying degrees throughout their industrial career.

It is apparent, however, that if vocational education is merely imposed upon the present distribution of industry between men and women it will fall far short in extending the range of women's industrial opportunity, and hence her earnings. If it is to be of substantial value in this respect, vocational education must remove the barriers to women's employment set by custom and tradition, and not by lack of capacity. It should build, for example, upon such facts as the fitness of women for work in the metal trades shown by their recent employment in that branch of industry. In this field a whole new group of training courses for women might easily be developed. In short, if vocational education attains to the measure of its possibilities for women it must be based on a sound analysis of the positions for which training is needed and a generous extension of this training to girls and women on equal terms with boys and men.

Yet, after all, is not the demand for formal technical training steadily on the decrease? The simple operations into which industry is now divided do not require it. They can be learned in the factory itself within a very short time. A girl (a boy, too) can slip from one industry to another and find the same situation wherever she goes—the unending round of unskilled occupations with which she is readily made acquainted by the forewoman or a fellow worker. This is a question that cannot be answered by reference to our present trade schools. There are those who recommend for this type of worker physical training and recreation properly organized and adapted to her need of relief from

the monotony of repetitive operations. This, they maintain, will make her a more efficient worker. It is quite possible they are right. The lack of interest in work which employers sometime advance as a reason for low wages may in all probability be traced to the very conditions of work that industry offers. In other words, we may question whether industry as at present organized provides the opportunity for maximum productive effort. The customary attitude of indifference on the part of the worker, the shifting about from place to place—these have reached proportions that make them a matter of widespread concern. Experts in scientific management are turning their attention to the problem to test ways of improving production through associated effort. It is by no means unlikely that within the factory itself will be worked out the most significant and far-reaching scheme of vocational education. But, as Miss Marot has recently pointed out, "if educators regard opportunities for growth with sufficient jealousy they will not wait for industry to emerge with a new program or system of production; they will initiate productive enterprises where young people will be free to gain first-hand experience in the problems of industry." [1] As a matter of fact, educators are already conducting experiments along these lines. In this field there is no reason to anticipate discrimination against girls and women, and in such benefit as it may confer they will have an equal opportunity to share.

The province of vocational education does not stop at this point. There are certain phases of what we may call general education which are typically vocational. Such a phase is indicated by Mr. Dewey in *Schools of To-morrow,* when he says that one of the primary and fundamental problems of education is to prepare individuals "to be

[1] *The Creative Impulse in Industry,* p. 108.

vitally and sincerely interested in the calling upon which they must enter if they are not to be social parasites and to be informed as to the social and scientific trainings of that calling." This can probably be done best through the vocational counsellor whose offices are already part of our public school system. The vocational counsellor has a unique opportunity to instil into the young girl a sense of worth and dignity for her wage-earning years. She can emphasize the importance of the choice of occupation. She can direct her towards a wide range of pursuits and guard her against that restricted opportunity which undermines effort and thwarts initiative.

Vocational education, then, in its broadest sense promises a substantially increased earning power. It offers the chance to develop new occupations for girls both within and without the industrial field; it tends to reduce the unfavorable concentration in the factory by broadening the field of economic opportunity in domestic service, and by extending the application of household arts to specifically wage-earning ends. In so far as it opens new industrial opportunities to women in the higher types of work it may relieve the existing pressure of numbers in unskilled occupations. To those who continue to be unskilled workers it may unfold a meaning to their task that will be translated into productive capacity. It should be, in short, the foundation of the effort which we evaluate and call wages.

CHAPTER IX

Conclusion

As suggested in the preceding chapters, the matter of raising the level of women's wages is one that cannot be effected with any single measure. Minimum-wage legislation, to which many are looking with hope and confidence, promises the most immediate and far-reaching changes in the wage scale. If enforced, it would raise appreciably the lower limits of the wage scale and thereby benefit thousands of workers. It would obviously eliminate excessively cheap women's labor from competing with either that of other women or of men. It would make it impossible for an employer to exploit the most necessitous worker, or to rely upon economizing on his wage bill to keep down expense of production. Wage legislation, in short, would set that civilization standard for wage payment that its proponents claim for it, and would limit industrial practice in the interests of community welfare as it has been limited by all other social or labor legislation.

But wage legislation by itself falls far short of a complete solution of low wages. At most it provides that a girl or woman shall receive a living wage during the specific days or hours that she is at work. But what of the irregularity of industry and its consequent unemployment or underemployment? This difficulty has not been dealt with in this country. It was no more than recognized by the Massachusetts Brush Workers' Wage Board. "Any minimum-wage finding," it stated, "which stops with merely naming a

minimum hourly rate looks well on paper, but accomplishes no actual result beyond a somewhat pale moral effect. No person can live wisely who tries to plan out his life on anything less than a weekly basis. The goal to aim at is a yearly basis." They added, however, that at present "An attempt to compel even a minimum weekly wage payable each week without regard to the average earning over a larger period would be an undue burden on many manufacturers." [1] A few English writers also have pointed this out. "Rates," said Mrs. Hubback in *The New Statesman*, February 21, 1914, "rates, whether time or piece, mean nothing till we know the average received during the year." Another writer in the same paper, June 6, 1914, maintained that unless employers reform their system of employment they "must be compelled, by the extension of the Trade Boards Act or by some other administrative machinery to pay a rate of wages which will assure to all . . . whose services are required at one time or another a rate of wages indubitably sufficient to provide a tolerable living wage."

Mr. Justice Higgins in the Australian Commonwealth Arbitration Court has set a precedent for that country at least in taking annual earnings as the basis for discussing minimum wages.[2] In the case of dock and wharf laborers the Justice found that the men were employed through the year an average of thirty hours a week. The hourly rate of pay was then fixed so that it would provide a living wage on a basis of thirty hours of work. The decision appears to have been made partly with the intention of forcing employers to regularize the work, for the award was provisional and applied only to the then existing status of employment.

[1] *Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission, Bulletin no. 3*, p. 28.

[2] *State Factory Investigating Commission, New York, Fourth Report*, vol. ii, pp. 305, 306.

It is a familiar fact that irregular employment is characteristic of almost every industry in which women are employed; the degree varies, but the great majority of workers must count on some weeks of complete idleness and of short time. In the garment trades, for example, a girl may have only three months of full-time work. During this busy season she may work not only full-time but over-time also. For some six months she will be employed on short-time, varying from two to five days a week. In the sewing trades, for between two and three months, she will find no employment at all. In the paper-box industry she will be what may be called a steady worker only if she comes within that fifteen per cent of the workers who are employed for eleven months or more. She will find, however, that in the course of the year one-half of her fellow-workers will stay in the same shop less than two months, and two-fifths will be there four weeks or less. Large numbers remain only a few days or hours and then slip out into other factories or into a period of idleness. In the confectionery trade, to take a final illustration, the irregularity of employment is even more marked. Only twelve per cent of the women employed in New York candy factories (1912-1913) held their places for more than eleven months. Nearly one-half remained in the same factory less than four weeks, and two-thirds had less than three months' continuous employment.

In view of what may be called the *normal* irregularity of employment, it is evident that wage legislation which does not reckon with it, will to that extent fall short of securing a living wage to the worker. The wage rate must be sufficiently high to cover the unemployed time, or wage legislation must be supplemented by unemployment insurance or by other measures providing for compensation during periods of involuntary idleness.

Promising as minimum-wage laws are as a remedy for

low wages, it would be very unfortunate if they should be allowed to obscure the value and necessity of voluntary action. They are a great step forward, but after all, they mark only a beginning in establishing the economic claims of women as a class of workers. Such evidence as we have tends to show that they benefit most the workers under twenty-one years of age. In fact, that has been a distinct ground of complaint on the part of older workers. It will be well if this discontent among adult women tends to stimulate voluntary effort to secure the higher earnings that continue to be a matter of bargaining. As a matter of principle, the writer would maintain that wage legislation should properly apply only to minors and that adult women should not be classed as children. It is argued by some, and we believe with a fair degree of soundness, that fixing a wage for both women and girls will militate to some extent against the higher earnings of adults. We do not fear that the minimum will actually become the maximum, but that is chiefly because we have faith in the growing determination of women to establish rates of pay on the basis of the work performed in that field where wages are still a matter of bargaining.

Many influences are at work to strengthen an already well-developed organization of women. With the rapid breaking-down of the exclusiveness of a labor movement organized on craft lines, we are entering upon a new period in which unskilled labor is assuming more of a claim to consideration. It is to the human element, especially in the great ranks of semi-skilled and unskilled workers, that personnel experts and industrial counsellors are giving their attention. Women are too important as productive factors in this industrial group to be ignored or relegated to a negligible position. In women themselves there is a new spirit, also a new sense of their importance as economic units, a

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new valuation of the pay envelope. If women are going to advance substantially in their position as wage-earners, it is vitally important to strengthen their voluntary organized efforts.

Finally, we have indicated the indispensable value of effort more seriously directed toward vocational ends. Ability is too rare not to be used wherever found, whether in boys or girls. The breakdown of the boundaries between "men's work" and "women's work" which is going on in factory and shop should enlarge the freedom of choice of occupation for girls. We have made no more than a beginning in our American experiment with vocational education, so that the time is favorable for the adoption of a program that shall insure the maximum contribution to productive work by both men and women.

To-day the labor movement the world over makes a new challenge to women to wrestle with the problem of adjusting their necessities and obligations as producers to the claims of an environment still largely dominated by the tradition of economic dependence and restricted economic opportunity. The wages they receive are a specific test of their economic status. Protective legislation will raise it, but the most enduring gains, if they are to be achieved at all, will come through a more adequate preparation for wage-earning, and through the demands of organized working women themselves.